MYTHOS OF THE ARK

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THE MYTHOS OF THE ARK.

THE MYTHOS OF THE ARK.

BY

J. W. LAKE,

AUTHOR OF "TREE AND SERPENT WORSHIP."

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"Back through the dusk
Of ages, Contemplation turns her view
To mark, as from its infancy, the world
Peopled again from that mysterious shrine
That rested on the top of Ararat."

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THE MYTHOS OF THE ARK.

IT is recorded in the Hebrew scriptures that once upon a time, somewhere about 2400 years before the Christian era, the Creator of the world was so incensed at the wickedness of men, that he determined to destroy the whole world, and that to effect this destruction he sent a deluge on the earth which covered the tops of the highest mountains, so that all living things perished excepting only Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives, with pairs or sevens of all the various kinds of animals which Noah was commanded to take with him into an ark, or floating house, which God had commanded him to build. These were shut up in the ark for several months, when, the flood having abated, the ark grounded on the top of a high mountain, and its inhabitants, released from their temporary imprisonment, replenished the earth with a new race of living creatures.

We have said the Hebrew scriptures record this narrative, and Englishmen are taught to believe that these scriptures are the infallible word of God—so the clergy of almost all denominations declare them to be. It is evident that such an event, had it really happened, could never have become a legitimate part of history. It relates altogether to times that are prehistoric, times of which oral tradition alone could tell. But in the Jewish history no traces of this tradition

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are to be found till after the Babylonish captivity, that is, for the 2000 years immediately following the event. The patriarchs knew nothing of the Flood; Moses seems equally in the dark concerning it; Noah is never so much as named in Jewish history, till a comparatively modern period of its annals. The book of Genesis, though placed at the head of the Jewish Bible, is one of the most recent instead of being one of the earliest of its records. Such at least are the conclusions of modern scholars, and those who are familiar with the writings of Colenso, Davidson, Kalisch, and others, know well how irresistible is the evidence on which these conclusions are based.

Geological researches have long demonstrated the impossibility of such a flood as that of which the book of Genesis speaks, having ever taken place. Yet our clergy are bound by the conditions of their office to teach the men and women of England to regard this narrative as a record of actual fact, to believe that the world was destroyed by a deluge as the book of Genesis states, and that the record of this event has been penned under the influence of a special inspiration from God.

Now the purpose of this pamphlet will be to show that this story of the Flood is a mere matter of ancient tradition, and ancient tradition is only another mode of expressing ancient fable. But the fables of antiquity had for the most part a religious, or philosophical, or mythological import. As the ancient Egyptians expressed their wisdom through hieroglyphic inscriptions, so all the ancient priesthood veiled their knowledge in some apologue or fable. As moral teaching even in our own day is often expressed by parable, so the philosophic wisdom of the ancient world found utterance in fables. Where moderns would write an essay, the teachers of the ancient world told a story; and possibly from this habit the latter phrase has come to have so equivocal

a signification, and the same word is made to stand at once for a narrative and a falsehood. By way of commencing our investigation, the reader's attention is called to the following traditions of the flood.

TRADITIONS OF THE FLOOD.

All the ancient religions, many of which were long anterior to Judaism, had in their records similar stories concerning a deluge, to that which the book of Genesis contains. "All the writers of barbarian histories," says Josephus, the Jewish historian, "make mention of this flood and this ark, among whom is Berosus the Chaldean."

The works of Berosus, who wrote probably in the age of Alexander the Great, *i.e.*, about 240 years before the christian era, are lost, save detached portions of them which are preserved in the writings of the early fathers, and the account of the Deluge is one of these. Those who lived before the Flood are represented as a race of giants, all of whom, save one, became exceedingly impious and depraved. "But," says Berosus, "there was one among the giants that reverenced the gods and was more wise and prudent than all the rest. His name was Noa; he dwelt in Syria and his three sons, Sem, Japet, Chem, and their wives the great Tidea, Pandora, Noela, and Noegla. This man, fearing destruction, which he foresaw from the stars would come to pass, began in the 78th year before the inundation to build a ship covered like an ark; at length the ocean burst its boundaries and the rain fell violently from heaven for many days, so that the mountains were overflowed and the whole human race buried in the waters, save Noa and his family."

Another Assyrian tradition relates, that the representative of the tenth generation after the first man, was Xisuthrus, a pious and wise monarch. The god

Chronos (Saturn or Belus) revealed to him that continual rains, commencing on a certain day, the 15th of the month Dæsius, would cause a general deluge by which mankind would be destroyed. On the command of the deity, Xisuthrus built an immense ship about three-quarters of a mile long and a quarter of a mile broad, ascended it with his family, his friends, and every species of quadrupeds, birds, and reptiles, after having loaded it with every possible provision, and sailed towards Armenia. When the rain cleared, he sent out birds to satisfy himself about the condition of the earth. They returned twice, but the second time they had mud on their feet, and the third time they were sent out they returned to him no more. Xisuthrus, who had by this time grounded in some Armenian mountain, left the ship, accompanied only by his wife, his daughters, and the pilot; they erected an altar and offered sacrifice to the gods and were soon raised to heaven for their exemplary piety. The others now left the ship with many lamentations, but they heard the voice of Xisuthrus admonishing them to persevere in the fear of the gods. They settled again in Babylon, from whence they started, and became the ancestors of a new population.*

The Hindoo records contain a similar and probably a more ancient tradition of the flood, in which the good king Satyavrata takes the place occupied by Noah in the Hebrew record. The Greeks had an exactly similar story of which Deucalion was the hero; while some coins which were struck at Apamea, named also κιβωτος, a boat, in the reign of the Emperor Septimius Severus, A.D. 193, represent a chest or ark floating on the waves, and containing a man and a woman. On the ark a bird is perched

* Kalisch; Historical Commentary on the Book of Genesis. But the heathen traditions of the flood may be found in Colenso on the Pentateuch. Hugh Miller's 'Testimony of the Rocks,'—Hardwick's 'Christ and other Masters,' &c., &c.

and another is seen approaching holding a twig with its feet. The same human pair is figured on the dry land, with uplifted hands and on several of these medals the name NO (NΩ) is clearly visible.*

The Egyptian tradition of the flood was recorded, Josephus asserts, by Manetho, but the greater part of the works of that historian have perished and this account is not extant. We shall see, however, when we come to speak of the mythological meaning of the flood, that the Egyptians had a very similar mythos.†

Traditions of the Flood exist also in the Scandinavian, Celtic, ancient British, Mexican, and the various mythologies of the new world, and the question naturally suggests itself, What relation do these traditions bear to the Hebrew story which our clergy declare has been given by the special revelation of God? It used to be thought a sufficient answer to say that all the Gentile traditions were copies and perversions of the Hebrew record, the prior antiquity of this record being of course assumed. We know now, however, that the Hebrew account is of comparatively modern date. The Jews themselves having no knowledge of such an event as the Deluge till after the period of the national captivity in Babylon.

* It is acknowledged that the Bible-records referring to the time previous to Abraham, and which were transmitted to later generations by the descendants of the ancestor of the Hebrew race, in some instances admit of an allegorical interpretation. Thus even the name of Noah may possibly have been chosen for the purpose of referring to the time of the Flood. It is well known that the word Noah is derived from the Aryan root 'na' or 'nach' which means water, from which the Indian 'naus,' the Latin 'navis,' and the German 'nachen' and 'nass' are derived.—*The Hidden Wisdom of Christ*, p. 10, *by Ernest De Bunsen.*

The nut, (in German 'nuss') was a 'naus' or little ship, a type of the ark, in which the infant deity lay hidden—*Lesley Man's Origin and Destiny*, p. 308.

† See the legend of Osiris and Typhon. Typhon was the ocean.

Dr Donaldson (Christian Orthodoxy, p. 221) says, "the traditions of Babylonian archæology, preserved to us in the fragments of Berosus, exhibit a remarkable correspondence with those which are incorporated in the Book of Genesis. It might of course be a question whether the Jews during their captivity borrowed the ten generations between Adam and Noah from the ten generations which connect Alorus and Xisuthrus, or whether they conversely furnished the Babylonians with the materials of their own cosmogony. In the absence of all evidence in favour of the supposition that the Jews had any such cosmogony before the exile, and with positive evidence of the fact that they borrowed many of their ideas from the heathen nations among whom they sojourned, at the time immediately preceding the formation of their present collection of sacred books, it would be more reasonable to conclude that the Babylonian traditions were the source of the Jewish. With regard to the Deluge, at any rate, every candid inquirer must admit that even if we had no other explanation to offer respecting Noah, the fact that the ark is represented as floating to the mountains of Armenia, points to the local inundation which devastated Babylonia and which the Babylonians limited to their own country."

Dr. Samuel Davidson, in his Introduction to the Old Testament, Vol. I., page 188, says: "Authentic Egyptian history ignores the existence of a general flood, to which there is no allusion in the annals from the epoch of Menes, the founder of the kingdom of Egypt, B.C. 3463, till its conquest under Darius Ochus, B.C. 340, whereas the period of the Noachian Deluge is said to be about 2348 B.C. At the latter time when the whole human race is supposed to have been reduced to a single family, the Egyptian people must have attained to a flourishing and civilized state; indeed, they were civilized and settled before

Menes united them into one great empire,—*i.e.*, towards 4000 B.C., the uninterrupted existence of their annals from Menes till Ochus, as well as the absence of all reference to a general flood, proves the non-occurrence of such a disaster."

The story of Noah's ark having no proper place in legitimate history, must thus be relegated to the realms of mythologic fable. The fables of the ancient world were, however, the means of concealing some secret wisdom, and the ark of Noah forms no exception to this rule.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE ARK.

Long before the Jews were acquainted with the story of the flood, they were accustomed to the use of an ark in their religious worship. This ark of the covenant being an oblong box of the same proportionate dimensions with the ship or ark of Noah, Josephus calls it the ark of God. It was the most sacred symbol of the Jewish worship, and in it were kept the tables of the law. To this day the ark of the covenant is used in the Jewish synagogues for the purpose of containing the rolls of the Jewish law. A similar ark, however, to that of the Jews was, we know, in use among the ancient Egyptians. "A sculpture exists representing Ramases III., accompanied by his priests and high officers, and the sacred bull Apis; and in this sculpture we see that an ark of the same size and shape as the Jewish ark was carried along upon men's shoulders in the sacred procession." —*Sharpe's Egyptian Mythology.* This was doubtless the ark of Osiris. A similar sacred chest was also carried in procession by the priests of Isis in the mysteries of that goddess, as related by Apuleius, and those who are familiar with the legend of Osiris well know that this sacred chest or ark contained the phallic emblems of fecundity. A ship or boat also formed one of the sacred symbols of this goddess, who was herself the

representative of the great mother—the maternal or prolific principle of nature.

The goddesses of the ancient worships are now well known to mythological students to have been the prototypes of the Virgin Mary, or mother of God, who is so highly reverenced in the Roman Catholic churches.* They were simply personifications of the maternal principle. The moon had the same signification; and as the sun, for the most part, was the symbol of the gods, so the goddesses were symbolized by the moon. The bull was in like manner the ancient symbol of fertility, of the sun at the Spring equinox, and the cow was for this reason sacred to Isis, and the symbol under which she was often worshipped. Antique statuettes are still in existence which picture this goddess with a cow's head, and nursing the infant god Horus, which statuettes, with a human face, would serve for the virgin and child of Catholic worship. The moon was the symbol of all these ancient goddesses, but only the crescent moon was used for this purpose. And this crescent moon, which forms an arc of a circle, was also the symbol of a boat or

* "The German mariolatry of the middle ages is to a large degree traceable to these previous heathen customs (the worship of the storm goddess, Freia Holda, transformed into Freia the goddess of love, of amorousness, of rejuvenescence, and of fertility). There are a number of highly-coloured hymns to the Virgin, the imagery of which is almost literally taken from similar Freia songs, fragmentary pieces of which latter have come down to us in children's rhymes. Many of these hymns would be perfectly unintelligible if we did not know the poetical surroundings of the Pagan goddess. Freia, the queen of the heavens, the sorrowing mother of Balder (that god of peace who met his death through the traitor Loki),* was transfused into the *Mater Dolerosa*, the 'mother of God,' of the Roman church, but in this transfusion she retained much of her original character."—*From an interesting article on Freia Holda, the Teutonic goddess of love, in the "Cornhill Magazine" for May* 1872.

* See the legend of the Death of Osiris.

ship. In a word, the ship or ark of Noah—the bull or cow—the crescent moon and the goddesses Isis, or Diana, or Juno, or Ceres, or Venus, or Freia, were symbols possessing a common significance, viz., the fertile principle of nature. In accordance with this view, we find that an egg was also a symbol of the ark—a symbol of the germ of animated nature.

In the pictures of the Virgin Mary in Catholic countries she is often represented with a crescent moon, this crescent being really the symbol of the ship or ark, and denoting the secret mythos which the ark of Noah enshrines. With this thought in our mind, we have only to read again the scripture narrative of the flood to see in the pairs or sevens—*male* and *female*, of all the various forms of animated life—in the manifest design of this selection—that the ark contained the fertile principle of nature, and in this sense was one and the same symbol with the ark or chest of Osiris. This reverence of the fertile or generative principle was the foundation of all the ancient worship, and it has struck its roots so deeply into the religion of all subsequent times, that we have not to look far to find evidences of it in the religious thought and customs of our own day. Our churches are built in the form of the ark*—an oblong square—and the principal portion of them bears the name "nave," a word derived from the Latin, navis, a ship; that word being in its turn derived from the Greek, Naus, whence our word nautical. "The early Christians were called nautai, or sailors."—*Riddle's Christian Antiquities.* But the word navel has also a similar derivation, the English word being associated with the Greek ναυς. The Latin umbilicus being an evident derivation from the Greek Ομφαλος. Jacob Bryant has some very curious remarks with regard to this latter word. He says the term OMPHI was of

* The chancel is a separate and distinct building appended to a church.

great antiquity, and denoted an oracular influence. The true rendering was the oracle of Ham, or Cham, or the sun, or Osiris. The mountains whence these oracles were delivered came to be denominated Har-al-ompi, which al-ompi was changed by the Greeks into Olympus. This word they associated with Omphalos, a navel, and so they said of the sacred oracle of Delphi that it was the umbilicus or navel of the world, and they applied this term to all other sacred mountains whence divine oracles were delivered. It is important to notice here the connection between the term navel, as associated with the word which designates a ship, with the act of birth or generation, and with a divine word or oracle.

Under the word Noah, the same author says, "The history of the patriarch was recorded by the ancients throughout their whole theology, but it has been obscured by their describing him under so many different titles and such a variety of characters. They represented him as Thoth, Hermes, Janus, Menes, Osiris, Zeuth, Atlas, Deucalion, Inachus, Prometheus, Saturn, Dionusus, &c., &c. Among the people of the East the true name of the patriarch was preserved. They called him "Noas," "Naus," and sometimes contracted "Nous." But "Nous" is the Greek term for mind, and Bryant proceeds to quote Anaxagoras, who identifies the Eastern Noah with the Greek Prometheus. Prometheia, he says, was the mind, and Prometheus was said to renew mankind by new forming their minds.

Noah or Noas was thus in all probability the etymological parent of the Greek word νεος, new, he having been patriarch or father of the new world. This connection of the ideas of life and mind has been fully shown in my pamphlet on "The Mythological Meaning of Tree and Serpent Worship," the serpent being on one hand the symbol of the generative power, and on the other hand the symbol of

the Logos or Divine wisdom. The ark is simply another form of the symbolism through which the old Nature worship found expression.

To the uninitiated Noah's ark would seem to have not the smallest relation to the Virgin Mary, and yet by an overwhelming amount of evidence we shall show them to be closely associated,—to be symbolical of the same mythos,—the crescent moon being the navicular symbol that unites them.

M. Didron in his "Christian Iconography" has an engraving of the Hindoo goddess Maya, her head surrounded by a glory, pressing her breasts, from which copious streams of milk flow, by which all living creatures are supported, and in her lap are represented the various animals, strongly reminding one of the groups which form the contents of the toy arks in common use to-day. In a word, Maya as the goddess mother of Nature is the emblem of the ark, since all existing beings may be said to have been born from her, she being but a symbol of the fertilizing properties of Nature. It is time, however, for us to consider the curious light which etymology throws upon the word ark, and though etymology may sometimes mislead us, yet the study of words and language is the study which of all others throws greatest light on the ideas which prevailed in the ancient world and on the origin and growth of religious dogma.*

* "The things which we call *words* are organic things like animals and vegetables. They have roots and branches. They grow and decay. They have fixed laws to govern their existence, like all other beings. They do not leap from our mouths helter-skelter as the toads and jewels dropped from the mouth of the cruel mother in the fairy tale. They are not accidentally created. We are not their voluntary creators. They breed in us and issue from us, not only from our lips but from our brains, by laws as regular and permanent as those which govern the conception and birth of broods of fishes, birds, or serpents. Language therefore must be a department of natural history. New expressions or idioms appear upon the face of human society just as new species

Our English word ark * is derived from the Greek αρχη, signifying a beginning in order of time, an entrance into being, first or chief in point of authority. The word in this sense is in common use. The Greek rulers were called Archons, our chief bishops are called ark- or arch-bishops. The science of antiquity is called ark-eology. The chief builder—the one who supplies the ideas—is called the architect. So the lunette or crescent is called the arc of a circle, and this gives its name to the circular arch. The Greek word for the ship of Noah was Kibotus. Our word ark, however, has evident relation to the Greek αρκη, and serves us as a plain guidance to the mythical meaning of the whole story of the flood.

"The Greeks called ARGos their most ancient city, and the mythological prototype of all sea-going ships was the ARGo. They considered the gods of ARCadia the most ancient deities. They called their most ancient and sacred religious ceremonies ORGs (οργια), from which the Christians got their opprobrious term 'orgies' for all sorts of heathen ceremonies, especially when they were practised in secresy. The Roman word for any mystery was ARCanum; for any religious teaching, ORACulum—that is an arkite thing—knowledge shut up and concealed from public view. The old Egyptian word ARK signifies upon the monuments, says Bunsen, conclusion, shutting up, and in Coptic it signifies to guard. From this sense we have the word *ara*, a citadel, and in this citadel were kept for safety

and varieties of animals and vegetables have successively made their appearance upon the surface of the earth and in the waters of the sea. And words and languages perish and are preserved in the history of literature precisely like those fossil forms of extinct plants and animals which we study in the geological deposits of the past."—*Lesley on Language as a Test of Race in "Man's Origin and Destiny."*

* Ark in Sanscrit signifies the sun. Vernon Harcourt's "Doctrine of Deluge," p. 495.

sacred ark was a necessary instrument in the due celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries. It was borne in solemn procession on the back of an ass, because an ass was deemed a symbol of typhon or the ocean, which sustained upon its waters the ark of the deluge, and its contents, according to Clemens Alexandrinus, were certain conical pyramids, cakes formed so as to exhibit the semblance of navels, pomegranates, and the symbol of the female principle spoken of in the Old Testament as the "ashera." For the specific meaning of these symbols the reader is referred to my tract on the "Mythology of Tree and Serpent Worship." Faber goes on to show that the sacred ark was but a symbol of the earth or world. The ark was in fact a miniature world, and containing as it did the germ of all animated things, it was regarded as the great mother whence all things sprung. Thus the ark, earth, and goddess were represented by common symbols. The lotus or lily, the egg, the ship, the cow, and the navicular or crescent shaped moon had in the ancient mythology the same typical significance, and all had reference to the myth of the deluge. The ark of Noah was thus symbolical of the earth or world. But according to Josephus the Jewish Tabernacle had a mystical meaning, and symbolised the world. Now, the ark of the covenant was regarded as a miniature tabernacle. It was, even among the Jews held to be the especial abode of the god,—of the source of life,—its contents being in early times emblematic of physical, as in modern times they are emblematic of moral or spiritual, life.

Faber shows that a sacred ark was reverenced in all the ancient religions. This ark was often represented in the form of a boat or ship, as well as by an oblong box or chest. Every writer, he says, who treats of Indian mythology notices the argha or sacred ark of the god Siva or Isa. The whole tenor of the Druidical superstition shows that an ark, or chest, or cell, or

ancient histories and writings, hence termed archives." —*Lesley.*

The ark had thus various meanings. It symbolised Noah, the great father of the new world, of which he was at once the parent and first man, and who was in ancient time worshipped as a god.* It symbolised, from the nature of its contents, the fertile principle of Nature, and thus was one and the same with the virgin goddesses of Paganism, with Maia of India, Isis of Egypt, Diana, Venus, and Astarte of Syria, Ceres of Greece, and Juno of Rome, who in turn were all symbols of the Holy Spirit, *i.e.*, of Deity in its feminine aspect. The episode of Juno on the top of Mount Ida is but another version of the ark resting on the peak of Ararat. The ark, too, was the symbol of salvation; it was the place of safety by which its occupants were saved from the devastations of the deluge. It was the secret receptacle where divine or creative wisdom was enshrined, and so the ark of the Jews contained the tables of the law, or in later times the roll of Scripture, while the ark of Egypt, representing the grosser idea of Divine wisdom, viz., creative power, contained the symbols of procreation. It is a little singular in this connection that the Jews were ordered to put into the ark of the covenant Aaron's rod that budded, and that consequently symbolised fertility; and here the idea of the Nature worship was preserved, though redeemed from the grossness that marked it in the Syrian and Egyptian religions.

This, too, implies a relation to have existed between the ark of Noah and the ark of the covenant or *testimony.*† The Jewish ark of the covenant was almost an exact fac-simile of the sacred ark of the Egyptians. Faber, in his "Origin of Pagan Idolatry," says the

* See Harcourt's "Doctrine of the Deluge."

† The ancient meaning of this word is in strict keeping with the preceding remarks.

boat, or cavern, was no less important in the Celtic mysteries than in those of Greece, Egypt, Italy, Phœnicia, Babylon, and Hindostan. The Spanish authors who discuss the early history and mythology of the Mexicans tell us that their great god Mezitli, (or Vitzliputzli was carried in a sacred ark on the shoulders of his priests during their progress in quest of a settlement, and that afterwards, when they finally settled in any place the same ark containing the image of the deity was solemnly deposited in his temple.

Jacob Bryant, in the preface to his Analysis of the Ancient Mythology, says, "Upon enquiry we shall find that the Deluge was the grand epocha of every ancient kingdom," and his work goes to show that this tradition of the destruction of the world by a flood, and the salvation of a single family in a ship or ark, was the mythos that lay at the foundation of all the ancient religious systems. Hence, in all the old worships the tops of mountains were esteemed sacred places. The altar derives its name from the Latin "*altus*,"—a high place. The altar was also, as we shall shortly see, the equivalent of the ark, and it was also the mountain on which the ark rested—AL-TOR the mountain. Various terms, says Faber, are employed by the Greeks to describe this mysterious ark, and they severally, according to their literal import, convey to us the idea of a chest, a boat, a coffin, or a navicular ark, such as that in which Deucalion and Pyrrha were preserved at the time of the deluge. The Egyptians and Hebrews, however, styled the ark Tebah,* Baris,† Argo, and Buto, or a coffin. The Hebrews used the word TBH (Teba) to designate the ark of Noah, and ARN (Aron) to designate the ark

* As Apamea was called the city of the Boat or Ark, so Thebes in Egypt was in like manner the city of the Ark or Coffin, because of the Royal graves there.

† From which our word bark or barque—a ship.

of the covenant.* This latter was intrusted to the sole guardianship of a class of priests the sons or descendants of Aaron—the sons or priests of the ark—showing thus that in all probability Aaron was a mythological and not a real person. "The word TBH," says Lesley, ("Man's Origin and Destiny," page 315), "is an Egyptian word, meaning a vase or pot. Gesenius says in his dictionary, that its Hebrew etymology is quite unknown. In the Coptic it means a cavern, a boat, a chest or a sarcophagus or coffin." Lesley also shows by a multitude of curious and striking ideas, that in early times architecture was closely associated with religion—symbolised the early religion in stone That religion had its origin, for the most part, in the arkite mythos, in the ship, or house, or chest, on the mountain top, containing the germs of renewed life. Thus one of the most common forms of religious architecture was in Egypt the pyramid or truncated cone, and in Greece the pediment—a word synonymous with pyramid—with a cross or urn at the top. (fig. 1.) As, however, Ararat was double peaked, and the ark was, in the current tradition, fabled to rest between the peaks, this pediment or pyramid was sometimes split in two, and the urn, or arn, or ark placed between them (fig. 2).

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

* It would seem probable that the Jews had the ark of the covenant centuries before they knew anything concerning the ark of Noah. As monotheists they stood in great measure aloof from the old world mythologies. The rites and ceremonies of these, however, occasionally crept in among them, and were adopted in their religious worship. Very much of the Jewish ritual was borrowed about the era of Solomon from

The altar of our Catholic churches, with the sacred chest which contains the consecrated host, is thus symbolical of the mountain with the ark. The chest in question corresponding with the ark or sacred chest of the Jewish and Egyptian worship. But the communion-table of Protestant worship is the analogue of the Catholic altar, is, in short, the TBH or Tebah, or ark. There are two sacred places in every house, the table at which meals are taken, the altar, as it were, of the household, and the circle round the fire-side. To sit at one's table is to enter the very sanctuary of domestic friendship. Just now there is a hot dispute among the Church of England clergy as to the proper designation of the piece of church furniture from which the sacraments are dispensed. Some claim it to be only a "table," others declaring it to be an "altar"—neither party apparently discerning that the two things have, as church symbols, the same meaning, and have descended from the old arkite worship. The cup on the table, the chest on the altar, the urn on the pediment, are one and the same symbol, and represent the ark on the mountain. Some time back the writer visited the somewhat notorious church of St Albans, Holborn—a church in which there is a profuse reproduction of what is called mediæval symbolism, but which in reality is a symbolism derived from these old worships. Here the "table" is boldly asserted to be an "altar." The writer's attention was arrested by the fact that around the arch dividing the chancel from the church, and on the wall immediately above the table or altar the decoration was the well known water symbol of the Egyptians indicative of the turbulent waves that surrounded the mount of safety and the ark of rest.

the Egyptians, and the ark had been borrowed at a much earlier period. The Freemasons at the present day use many rites and symbols of whose ancient meaning they are wholly ignorant.

We have seen that the ark was designated by a word which had the meaning of a sepulchre or tomb.* It was the tomb of Noah, and of the remnant of the old world life that it contained; and these, when the flood subsided, were born as it were into new life. So the ark was the symbol of resurrection or regeneration, and in this sense allusion is made to it in the baptismal service of the Church of England—in the prayer which asks that the recipient may be saved from the waves of this troublesome world, and be received into "*the ark of Christ's Church.*" In the old mythology Janus was a representation of Noah. He was represented with two faces, as one that looked upon two worlds, and on the reverse of his coins was a dove circled with an olive branch. "He was represented," says Bryant, "as a just man and a prophet." There was a tradition that he raised the first temple to heaven, and he was regarded as one of the cabiri, or the eight original deities of the ark. He is represented with a key, and is termed the deity of the door or passage; hence, in reference to him, every door among

* In early Christian times the altar was in some sense a tomb. The sepulchre of a saint became his shrine—that is, a chest or box containing sacred relics. Sometimes churches as well as altars were erected over the graves of the dead, and for the same reason the vaults beneath churches were wont to be used as cemeteries. In the second Council of Nice a law was passed which made bishops subject to deprivation if they consecrated a church without relics—that is, remains of a saint. England was at one time sorely puzzled to find relics fast enough for all her new altars (*Soame's Anglo Saxon Church*, 130), and this led to their fraudulent fabrication. The altar of a saint was in some sense the tomb of the saint, and the chief altar is in this sense regarded as the tomb of the god who is worshipped. The ideas of death and resurrection are closely associated with the mass service performed on Catholic altars, and with the communion service of the Lord's table, or Tebah, or ark in Protestant churches.

The word "mystery" applied to the pagan celebration of arkite worship is still applied to the mass and communion services of Christian worship.

the Latins was called Janua, and the first month of the year was called January, as being an opening of a new era. In this sense the ark had the meaning of the resurrection, and here its symbol was an egg.

An egg was a common symbol in the mythology of the ancient world. A bull butting an egg with his horns, and thus breaking the shell and liberating the imprisoned life, was the symbol of the opening year at the time when the year had its commencement in the Spring, or season in which the earth's fertility, which had been destroyed by Typhon, or Ahriman, or winter, was renewed by Osiris, or Ormusd, or the Spring sun. Virgil alludes to this idea: "Candidus auratis aperit quum cornibus annum Taurus." This is the meaning of the Pasch or Easter eggs; they are symbols of resurrection or renewed life, and in this sense were used in the religious rites of Greece, India, and Egypt.

"The egg," says Jacob Bryant, "as it contained the principles of life, was thought no improper emblem of the ark, in which were preserved the rudiments of the future world. Hence in the Dionusian and in other mysteries one part of the nocturnal ceremony consisted in the consecration of an egg." This egg, he asserts, on the authority of Porphyry, was symbolical of the world, and was called the mundane egg, or egg which enclosed the world.

The author of the "Two Babylons" says: "From Egypt these sacred eggs can be distinctly traced to the banks of the Euphrates. The classic poets are full of the fable of the mystic egg of the Babylonians, and its tale is thus told by Hyginus the Egyptian, the learned keeper of the Palatine library at Rome in the time of Augustus: "An egg of wondrous size is said to have fallen from heaven into the river Euphrates, out of which came Venus, who afterwards was called the Syrian goddess, *i.e.*, Astarte. Hence the egg became one of the symbols of Astarte, or Easter, and

accordingly at Cyprus, one of the chosen seats of the worship of Venus or Astarte, an egg was represented of huge size. The occult meaning of this mystic egg of Astarte (for it had a twofold significance) had reference to the ark during the time of the flood, in which the whole human race were shut up as a chick is enclosed in the egg before it is hatched. The application of the word egg to the ark comes thus:—The Hebrew name for an egg is BEITZ. This in Chaldee and Phœnician becomes BEITH, which is also the term for house, as Beth-el, house of God. The egg was thus the house or ark in which the principle of life was enclosed."

The egg thus symbolized a tomb and a resurrection —destruction and creation. Not a few of the ancient nations, says Dr. Oliver (*Signs and Symbols*), blended the creation and the deluge so intimately that the same mythos applies to either event. The book of Genesis tells us that in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, and the seventeenth day of the month, the flood began, and Noah entered the ark. Plutarch, in his treatise "*De Iside et Osire*," says "that Osiris, to avoid the fury of Typhon, went into his ark, and that it happened on the seventeenth day of the month Athyr, when the sun was in Scorpio. The Egyptians, he tells us, kept two festivals at opposite parts of the year, viz., the spring and autumnal equinox, the spring festival being the resurrection and the autumn festival the death of Osiris; and he says that on the seventeenth day of the second month after the autumnal equinox Osiris was shut up in his coffin or ark, and this agrees with the very date at which Noah was said to have entered his ark, the civil year of the Jews beginning with the autumnal equinox. The time of Noah's liberation from the ark was the commencement of the natural year, the time when Osiris was fabled to enter, not the ark, but the moon (Isis), and to bring back the earth's fertility.

The interval during which Osiris was in the ark symbolized the Winter or season of the earth's sterility. The legend of Osiris being slain by Typhon is thus the foundation legend of the old nature worship. It is the sun losing its power—the earth deprived of its fertility—the death of Osiris, or nature, or Ormusd, slain by Ahriman; and the opening spring time was the great resurrection festival, when Noah leaves the ark, or Osiris quits his tomb, or the egg gives up its imprisoned life, or the earth's fertility is restored, or the sun's power regained. Easter Day, as now kept in connection with the asserted resurrection of Jesus, is simply the adaptation of a festival of the ancient religion to the purposes of a new faith. It takes its name from the Saxon goddess Eostre, who is the same with the Syrian Astarte and the Egyptian Isis. The story of the flood has, however, a relation to another mythological idea—the "Neros," or succession of ages or cycles, or the renewal of worlds. In the Hindoo mythology this idea finds expression in the Kali Yug, or great year or age of Brahm, at the expiration of which the old world is destroyed and a new world produced. Josephus, however, speaks of a great year composed of six hundred ordinary years; this constituted the ancient cycle of the Neros. "God," he says, "afforded the patriarchs a longer term of life on account of their virtue and the good use they made of their wisdom in astronomical discoveries, which they would not have had the means of foretelling unless they had lived six hundred years; for the great year is completed in that interval." Godfrey Higgins, in his Celtic Druids, shows that the ancients thought that six hundred years constituted a soli-lunar period, or a period in which the sun and moon would again sustain exactly the same relations to each other. Thus if at any time there was a new or full moon, at the same moment six hundred years hence there would be new or full moon again. With each of

these periods the ancients held that there was a new age and a new world. The Avatars of the Hindoo mythology, and the golden, iron, brass, &c., ages of the Roman mythology, are illustrations of this thought; and in the celebrated lines of Virgil, predicting the commencement of a new cycle and the return of the golden age, the idea finds very plain expression :—

> "Jam redit et virgo redeunt saturnia regna,
> Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto."

The great series of revolving ages begins anew. Now too returns the virgin Astrea,* returns the reign of Saturn, now a new progeny from high heaven descends!" The duration of an age was 600 years, and then men looked for wonderful changes to come. It was in the second month of the 600th year of his age that Noah entered into the ark, and it was on the first day of the first month of the 601st year, or the first day of the first year of a new age, that Noah is said to have left the ark and to have commenced the inauguration of a new world.

Saturn was the Greek Chronos,† the God of Time. Jacob Bryant says he was the same with Janus and Noah. The association of a new rule of justice, of an age of virtue succeeding an age of wickedness, and this under the rule of a virgin goddess, identifies the prediction of Virgil with the mythos of the ark. The zodiacal emblems show the astronomical explanation of which the mythos is capable. Taurus or the Bull was the sign in which the sun was, and under which the sun was worshipped at the spring equinox. Hence Osiris was represented by

* Astrea, in the mythology of the ancients, was the goddess of justice. She resided on the earth during the reign of Saturn in the golden age, but shocked at the impiety and wickedness of men in the succeeding ages, she returned to heaven, and became one of the signs of the zodiac.

† Hence our word chrone, signifying an old woman, and saturnalia as applied to wild and licentious orgies.

the Bull Apis, and Isis represented as a woman with a cow's head. The Bull Apis was marked on the shoulder with a crescent symbolising the moon or ark. The virgin Isis, with a cow's head, nursing Horus, was the prototype of all the virgin goddesses, mothers of God, and queens of heaven of the old classic mythology. At Ephesus she was represented in grotesque though human form, with a multitude of breasts. Here she bore the name Diana, and represented in a crude way the principle of maternity. Greek art represented the Egyptian Isis as a beautiful woman, nursing the infant Horus; and Mr Sharpe, in his "History of Egypt," tells us that when the worship of Isis was interdicted at Rome, and that of Christianity established in its place, the painters, who hitherto had got their living by painting pictures of Isis and Horus, still continued to paint the same pictures of the Virgin and Child, calling them now Mary and the Infant Jesus. The old mythological taint still continues, and I have before me while writing a beautifully coloured picture of the Virgin Mary, accompanied with a large lunette or curved moon, or ship symbol, thus showing how Christian art still associates with its paintings, as Christian festivals continue in their usages—the buns of Good Friday (the cakes that were offered to Astarte) and the eggs of Easter—the symbols of the world's most ancient mythologies.

THE ARK IN ITS CONNECTION WITH THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES.

The story of the Ark and Deluge is the story of the destruction of an old world and the creation of a new world. The liberation of its occupant is therefore to the existing age the creation of the first man, an event common to all nations, and the point to which all tradition must converge. The name ark (ἀρχη) signifies first, pre-eminent, and most ancient, and in

this sense mingles with our common speech to-day. It is well known that all the ancient religions consisted of two parts—one a system of ceremonies and sacrifices open and common to the masses of the people, the teachings of which were exoteric or public, and another portion which was kept carefully concealed from the public eye, in which a high philosophy and a pure morality were taught, and which from the secrecy and mystery in which its proceedings were shrouded was termed esoteric or hidden. To these religious rites—mysteries as they were termed—only a select few were admitted, and these only after a lengthened probation and passing through a series of symbolical and initiatory rites, in which the candidates were surrounded by a variety of terrors and difficulties, and were beset by imaginary dangers and perils, so that their courage of body and mind were put to a most severe test.

We have seen that the ark signified a coffin or a sepulchre. The English word boat is derived from the Greek κιβωτος, or an ark; or the Coptic beut, a coffin or sepulchre. Among the Celtic Britons the ark of Aeddon was considered as his temple, or sanctuary, or resting place; this they were wont to style his bedd, which word, like the Coptic beut, denotes a coffin or sepulchre. The word is used in this sense to-day in Wales in the shrine which so many tourists visit, and which is called indifferently Bethgelert or Beddgelert, meaning the grave of Gelert. In the Book of Genesis the same word is used to designate the ark of the covenant and the *soros* or coffin within which the dead body of Joseph was deposited. This word was ARN (aron), and it lives in our midst to-day in the word urn, a vase containing the ashes of the dead.

The ark was thus at once the coffin or the ship of the hero gods. In the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, Plutarch relates that the image of a dead man was

carried about in an ark or small boat of a lunette form, which served him as a coffin. This person was Osiris, and this interment they viewed as the disappearance of the Deity, and the lamentations occasioned by his being dead or lost constituted the first part of the Mysteries. Afterwards, on the third day subsequent to his enclosure within the ark, a procession went down to the sea at night, the priests bearing the sacred ark. Into this they poured water from the river, and when this rite had been duly performed, they raised a shout of joy, exclaiming that the lost Osiris had been found, that the dead Osiris had been restored to life, that he who had descended into Hades had returned from Hades. The exultations in which they now indulged constituted the second or joyful part of the mysteries. Hence originated those watchwords used by the Mystæ: "We have found him, let us rejoice together."* The ancient Mysteries had their celebrations prohibited by law by the Emperor Theodosius in the 4th century. Still the mysteries of Diana were celebrated in the middle ages in many parts of Europe, and the mysteries themselves still live in our midst to-day in the rites and initiations of the Freemasons. The Freemasons' lodge is a temple, or tabernacle, or ark, and the ark itself (for the Freemasons, like the Jews

* The women weeping for Tammuz or Adonis, the sun god of Syria, alluded to by Ezekiel, and the search of the disconsolate Ceres, in the "Grecian Mysteries," for her lost daughter Proserpine, carried off by Pluto into the infernal regions, are modifications of the same mythos. The reader will be struck with the similarity of this mourning and rejoicing to the Good Friday celebration of the death of Jesus, and the rejoicing on account of his resurrection on Easter Sunday. The scholars of Christ's Hospital, in their Easter visits to the Mansion House, have or had (for the writer is speaking his own experience thirty years since) a piece of paper pinned upon their coats, about three inches long by one inch broad, having printed upon it in black letter the legend, "He is risen!"

and Egyptians, use an ark in their rites) is but a miniature representation of the lodge. (Lodge is derived from the Sanscrit loga, signifying the world.) Dr Oliver, who has written very learnedly concerning the rites and symbols of Masonry, calls the ancient Paganism spurious "Masonry," whereas the palpable fact is that Masonry is spurious Paganism—is a modern imitation of the ancient mysteries. Dr Oliver says, "Masonry was revealed to Adam in Paradise," and certainly its rites carry their allusions back to a period much more remote than the building of Solomon's Temple.

Reproducing the ancient religion we surely expect to find in Freemasonry the reproduction of the ancient mythos, to find therefore many allusions to the ark. In Mr Mackey's interesting lexicon of Freemasonry, he tells us that the Freemasons call themselves "Noachites," or observers of the commandments of Noah,* and claim that when mankind began to wander once more from paths of purity, the principles of Noah were still perpetuated by that portion of the race whom the Freemasons regard as their immediate ancestors. The seven precepts viz., to renounce all idols, to worship the only God, to commit

* The Noachites were a class of people who were not Jews but who were said to be the sons of Noah, because they observed the seven moral precepts called the commandments of Noah. The Talmud recognises these people as pious men. "Whoever receives the seven commandments," says the oral law, which the Talmud records, "and is careful to observe them, he is one of the pious of the nations of the world and has a share in the world to come."—*Hilchoth Melachim*, ch. 8, 10. Again, "we are bound," says a Talmudist, "to love as brethren all those who observe the *Noachides*, whatever their religious opinions may otherwise be. We are bound to visit their sick, to bury their dead, to assist their poor like those of Israel." *M'Caul's old Paths.* They were probably the virtuous heathen, who, celebrating the mysteries or receiving the sacraments of their religion virtually ranked as the true descendants of Noah to whom under the various names of Osiris, Bacchus, Adonis, &c., the mysteries related.

no murder, to abstain from incest, from stealing, to be just, and to eat no flesh with the blood in it, were said to form the constitution of the ancient brethren. Moreover, the acme of masonic science bears the title of royal arch degree. This word arch is merely αρχ pronounced soft, the word ark and arch are the same as seen in composition, arch-deacon and arch- or ark-angel. Accordingly we find this Royal Arch degree has secret reference to the ship mythos, for in Scotland the royal arch masons bear the title of "*Royal Ark Mariners.*" In the Masters or third degree of masonry we have the death of Osiris or Noah, celebrated by the death of Hiram Abiff, the chief builder or architect of the temple. Mr Mackey says that Freemasons take the name Hiramites to indicate their descent from Hiram, and this term is more particularly used in the Scotch degree of Patriarch Noachite, to distinguish master-masons from the brethren of that degree who profess to descend immediately, and without connection with temple masonry, from the sons of Noah. Some learned writers, he adds, embrace all masons under the term Noachites.

Before the final initiation into the Isidian or Osirian mysteries, some very terrible ordeals have to be passed; a state of darkness besets the aspirant, in which terrible sounds are heard and across which appalling visions flash. The reader will find a very vivid delineation of these terrors in Moore's Epicurean, in which the ceremonies of initiation are very fully described. It is these which are imitated in the ceremonies which the Freemason undergoes before his admission to the degree of master-mason. Mr Mackey says, in the master-mason's degree, which is the perfection of symbolic or ancient craft masonry, the purest of truths are unveiled amid the most awful ceremonies. None but he who has visited the holy of holies and travelled the road of peril can have any conception of the mysteries unfolded in this degree.

In the language of the learned and zealous Hutchinson, "the master-mason represents a man saved from the grave of iniquity and raised to the faith of salvation." It testifies our faith in the resurrection of the body, and while it inculcates a practical lesson of prudence and unshaken fidelity, it inspires the most cheering hope of that final reward which belongs alone to the "just made perfect."

Dr Oliver, in his exposition of "masonic signs and symbols," says, (and he is here illustrating masonic practices, the initiatory rites of this degree by the ancient usages,) "an extraordinary ceremony referring to the Deluge, was used in the initiations which shows how mysteriously that event was preserved and transmitted. The violent death of some unhappy individual was here celebrated, whose body they affected to have lost, and much time and many ceremonies were expended in the search, even the aspirant himself was made figuratively to die, and to descend into the infernal regions for the purpose of ascertaining the fate of him whose disappearance they ceased not to deplore. This part of the ceremony was performed in darkness, and was accompanied with loud lamentations, the body being at length found, the aspirant was passed through the regenerating medium and was said to be *raised from the dead and born again.* This was the commencement of joy and gladness.* This ceremony bears evident reference to the descent of Noah into the darkness of the ark which was his emblematical coffin."

Dr Oliver did not write to enlighten the general public, but master-masons who know the mysterious darkness through which they have to pass before entering on the master's degree, and the peculiar rites attending their initiation into it, find them clearly explained by these ancient usages and fables.

The master-mason's degree embodies the story of the

* See the legend of the death of Osiris before referred to.

assassination of Hiram, the architect or master builder of Solomon's temple, who, tradition relates, was murdered by three of the fellow-craftsmen or labourers for refusing to deliver up the secret password that was entrusted only to master-masons. In the initiatory rites of this degree the incidents of this assassination are rehearsed. The lodge is hung with black and becomes a sepulchral vault dimly lit with tapers in the middle of which is placed a coffin; the brother about to be admitted is suddenly smitten on the forehead and falls as if dead, is then in some lodges placed in the coffin or *pastos** and covered with a pall. The brethren then stand round in an attitude denoting sorrow and revenge. The ceremonies then go on to describe the raising of Hiram by Solomon, in which the brother is restored to life and his initiation after a lecture on life, death, and immortality, is complete. In a word, we have in this masonic degree a repetition of the tradition of the death and resurrection of Osiris, Adonis, &c., and of the entrance of Noah into the ark and his egress from it.

While in the ancient religions a crude polytheism was taught to the people at large, the initiated were instructed in the great doctrines of the unity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the system of future punishment and reward. The initiated, however, are a select few, and to these the higher and secret doctrines were revealed. As these initiations are reproduced in masonry by the various degrees which are therein conferred, and the meaning of which is kept secret from all but the initiated, so they are to be seen in the communion services of the Christian church, especially in that of the church of Scotland, where it is

* Clement of Alexandria says, that in the old mysteries, those who had undergone the higher initiation of which the master's degree is a copy, were wont to say, the better to veil their meaning from the uninitiated, I have descended into the bedchamber, *i.e.*, I have slept the sleep of death.

celebrated only at long intervals, half-a-year it may be. The celebration then takes the character of a general holiday so that the occasion of its observance, from the large gatherings of people that are brought together, has been named the holy fair.

Faber, who of all authors has given this subject the most elaborate investigation, says, the philosophy inculcated in these mysteries taught that matter was eternal, but that it was liable to endless changes and modifications; that over it a Demiurgic Intelligence presided, who, when a world was produced out of chaos, manifested himself at the commencement of that world as the great universal father of both men and animals; that during the existence of the world every thing in it was undergoing perpetual change; that at the end of a certain great appointed period the world was destined to be reduced to its primeval material chaos, that the agent of its dissolution was a flood either of water or of fire; that at this time all its inhabitants perished and the great father from whose soul the soul of every man proceeded, and into whose soul all souls must be resolved, was left in the solitary majesty of abstracted meditation, that during the prevalence of the Deluge and the reign of chaos he floated upon the surface of the mighty deep reposing in the bosom of his consort the great mother, who then assumed the form of a ship, but who was likewise represented by the lotos, or the egg, or the serpent, or the navicular leaf, or the lunar crescent; that the two powers of nature, male and female, or the great creative father, and the great creative mother, were then reduced to their simplest principles and sailed over the face of the illimitable ocean in the form of a ship and mast.

At the close of the divine year the deluge subsided, and the great father awakening from his deathlike sleep, and bursting forth from the womb of the great mother within which he had been confined, created a

new world out of the chaotic wreck of the old world. That a new race of mortals and of animals was produced, and that every thing that had occurred during the existence of the preceding world recurred again in the new one. The mysteries, in short, treated throughout of a grand and total regeneration; a new birth which related to the old world, the great demiurgic parent, and to every individual man. Hence, the golden figure of a serpent as a symbol of immortality was placed in the bosom of the initiated, and hence from the earliest ages, the male and female principle of fecundity were deemed sacred symbols of the great father and the great mother, and were introduced into the orgies (or arg or ark ceremonies*). In the classic mythology Juno was represented sustaining a lunette upon her head and standing on a larger lunette, the crescent being depicted as to appear floating on the surface of the sea, precisely after the fashion of the modern life-boat.

The Egyptians had two yearly festivals, in the one of which they celebrated the entrance of Osiris, the sun, into the moon, Isis, and in the other, his entrance into that ark in which he was enclosed by Typhon, and thus set afloat upon Oceanus or the Nile. But according to Plutarch this ark was itself a navicular moon.† The account which Diodorus gives is exactly to the same purpose. He tells us that Isis enclosed Osiris within a wooden cow during the turbulent reign of Typhon, or the all-prevailing ocean. Osiris was

* See Milman's *History of Christianity*, book 1., chap. 1. *Apuleius Metamorphoses*, and see also Buchanan's *Christian Researches* for an account of this worship existing in a degenerate and licentious form among the Hindoos of the present day.

† These terms simply imply the conjunction of the sun and moon, or, as we say now, the new moon of the spring and autumnal equinox. The first took place in the sign of Taurus or the Bull; hence the worship of the Bull, and the representation of Isis as a cow; the latter in the sign Scorpio, the emblem of Typhon or the destroyer.

then indifferently said to enter into the moon, into an ark, and into a cow dedicated to the moon. The moon, therefore, and the cow dedicated to the moon, were alike symbols or hieroglyphics of the ship of Osiris—the one astronomically, the other physically. The sacred cow was in Egypt dedicated to the moon, and was called Tebah,* which literally signifies an ark, and she was palpably the same as the ark into which Osiris was driven by Typhon.—(*Faber's Pag. Idol.*, vol. 3, page 7.)

THE ARK CONSIDERED AS A TYPE OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

Baptism as a symbol of regeneration was a religious rite in common use in the ancient religions. John the Baptist, we are told, preceded Jesus, and baptism by immersion in water was the initiatory rite by which admission into the Essenian community could alone be obtained. Tertullian, in his treatise "*De Baptismo*," says that in Egypt disciples were admitted into the religion of Isis and Mithra by means of Baptism. This they think sets them free from their perjuries and accomplishes their regeneration. The Persians derived the practice of Baptism from India, the cradle of the world's ancient faiths. The use of water, the agent of material cleansing, as a symbol of moral purification is so natural that every religion of antiquity might have adopted it on entirely independent grounds. But coupled with baptism we find the idea, not only of purification, but also of regeneration or new birth,† and this idea connects the rite with the

* Thebes was the chief city of Egypt, the city where the Bull Apis was worshipped and buried.

† Baptismal regeneration is a question that at the present moment divides the Established Church into two hostile parties. The High Church party, however, who advocate this doctrine, have all the authority of antiquity in their favour. This was the ancient significance of the baptismal rite; but this furnishes no evidence of its being a true doctrine.

fundamental idea of the ark and flood, of a regenerate or new-born world, and of a regenerate or new-born man in the person of Noah, which doctrines formed the basis of the ancient worship.

As water had once purified the world from sin, and, destroying the old, had produced a world altogether new; so immersion in water was the typical rite for the purification and new birth of the soul. As in the ancient mysteries, those who were initiated were made to undergo a figurative death, so on the completion of the rites they were said to have been new born. To this day the distinctive title of the Brahmin in Hindostan is "twice born," and a Brahmin who loses caste by travelling can only recover it by being *born again*, either from a golden woman or a golden cow, as symbols of the great mother. Another mode of regeneration practised in India, and traces of which are still found throughout Europe, especially in Ireland, is by squeezing the individual through a small hole in a rock. There is an orifice of this description near the famous Elephanta cavern temple, and another in the island of Bombay. This latter place, a natural crevice on the side of the Malabar hill, communicating with a cavern below, which opens towards the sea, is still used by the Hindoos as a mode of gaining purification from their sins, which, they say, is effected by their going in at the opening below and emerging from the orifice above. This orifice is deemed symbolic, as the door of each mithraitic cavern and the door in the floating moon through which the ancients fabled all souls were born, and the door in the side of the ark through which Noah and his companions emerged to a new life in a new world.

That a connection was held to exist between the rite of baptism and the tradition of the Deluge is amply evidenced by the way in which the earliest Christian writers connect the two together—an association which is still to be found in the Church of

England baptismal service. The writer of the second epistle of Peter alludes to the destruction of the world by water on account of its wickedness, and to its then pending destruction by fire, and says, "nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Tertullian writing about the close of the second century says, *De Baptismo*, "As after the waters of the flood, whereby the ancient iniquity was purged away after the *baptism*, if I may so speak, of the world, the dove sent from the ark announced to the earth that the wrath of heaven was pacified; so by the same disposition of spiritual effects the dove of the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven where the church is a spiritual ark, flies down to our earth, that is to our flesh, emerging from the laver after our former state of sin, and brings the peace of God. But the world again relapses into delinquency, and in this evil too baptism may be compared to the Deluge."

Origen, who wrote a century later, says, in a homily on the Hebrew story of the Flood, "as at the Flood Noah was told to make an ark and to introduce to it, not only his sons and relatives, but also animals of every sort, so our Noah, Jesus Christ, at the bidding of his Father, made an ark and dens in it for the reception of various animals. Thus people who are saved in the church are compared with those, whether men or beasts, who were saved in the ark," and then he goes on to assert that there are degrees among them, but that the lower pass through ascending stages till they come to that which is occupied by "the sons or relatives of our true Noah or Rest." And in commenting upon the fourteenth chapter of Ezekiel, Origen has these remarks which the reader would do well to consider in connection with what has been said of the typical ceremonies of the master's degree in Masonry, "I once heard a Jew say Noe, Daniel, and Job are introduced because each of them

saw three periods, one of joy, one of sorrow, and again one of joy. Consider Noe before the Deluge when the world was in its bloom; the same Noe afterwards preserved in the ark (which, in another place, he says was shaped like a pyramid—the pyramid was the tomb of Osiris) amidst the wreck of the whole earth. Consider how, after the Deluge, he went forth and planted a vineyard and became, as it were, the author of a second world."

Enough has now been said to indicate that Noah was a mythological fancy, not an actual historical personage. The name signifies rest—safety—salvation. Dr. Donaldson has some curious remarks in this direction. He says: "An apostle has told us that the ark of Noah is a type of baptism (1 Peter iii. 20, 21), and it was by baptism that the mystæ were admitted to the privileges of initiation. It could not therefore be an accident that those who were received into that shadowy church of heathenism were expressly taught to consider and speak of themselves as having just escaped from the waves of a stormy sea, and as having found shelter and peace." And then he goes on to show that Solomon, the "man of peace," dedicated his temple on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the day on which Noah, "the man of peace" or rest, emerged from the ark and erected his altar. The dove with the olive branch is to this day a symbol inseparably associated with the ark; but the dove is also the bird sacred to Venus as the symbol of the great mother, while the Peacock, the symbol of the rainbow, (another arkite emblem, the first arch or ark of the covenant,) was the bird sacred to Juno, the queen of heaven, and the great mother of the gods among the Romans.

The ark has also a meaning of another character. As in another class of solar myths, the Cross symbolized the Phallus and the Logos, and as the creative act came also to imply the idea of creative wisdom, so the

ark, as the symbol of the renovation of the physical world, came to signify also its intellectual and moral regeneration. And so the ark came to symbolize Divine wisdom, or the Logos, and was in this higher sense the symbol of salvation, the emblem of the Christ. It bears this higher meaning of Divine wisdom as used in the Jewish synagogue, and it is employed in this higher sense in the rites of modern Freemasonry. As the coffin belongs to the Masters' degree, so the ark is the symbol of the Royal Arch or Ark degree. In the synagogue it contains the sacred books, the word or wisdom of God, and in the Freemasons' lodge it contains the book of the constitutions of the society—the secret or sacred wisdom, *i.e.*, the "Logos." In the ancient world Noah was often worshipped as God,* in the same way as Jesus, in his character of Christ, is worshipped as God at the present day. There are times when a distinction is made, and Noah and Christ regarded as subordinate to God, but at other times the characters are merged into one, and then they were regarded as God. In the heathen temples the ark was thought to contain the God,—to be the divine dwelling place,—and it was on the ark, between the cherubim that covered it, that in the Jewish temple God was thought to be especially present. In Catholic and Ritualistic, nay even in the majority of Protestant churches, it is on the altar or communion table—the substitutes for the ark of Jewish and heathen worship—that God is held to be actually present to-day. These are placed in the central and most sacred portions of the churches, the chancel being to Catholics and Protestants the holy of holies of Christian worship. In Freemasonry the Royal Arch or Ark ($\alpha\rho\chi$) degree constitutes the summit of masonic science. Here the fulness of the secret wisdom is imparted, and to this degree, as to the

* Vernon Harcourt, on the Worship of Noah in the East. See Doctrine of the Deluge.

communion rite of churches, only a select few are admitted. These constitute, as it were, the esoteric brotherhood—the fully initiated. In the ancient mysteries of Isis and Osiris in Egypt, and of Ceres and Bacchus in Greece, the candidate, after witnessing the terrible celebration of the death of the god, was at length led out of the darkness and terrors into a chamber where, amid a flood of dazzling light, he was permitted to gaze on a beautiful and resplendent statue of the goddess Ceres or Isis. In this scene of celestial splendour the secret doctrine was revealed, and he who had before been called a "*mystes*," or novice, was now termed an "*epoptes*," or eyewitness.

Apuleius, who in the second century underwent initiation into the mysteries of Isis, has written a lengthened account of the proceeding and its preparatory rites. In one of these the priest tells him, "The gates of the shades below and the care of our life being in the hands of the goddess, the ceremony of initiation into her mysteries is as it were to suffer death, with the precarious chance of resuscitation. Wherefore the goddess, in the wisdom of her divinity, hath been accustomed to select as persons to whom the secrets of her religion can with propriety be intrusted, those, who standing as it were in the utmost limit of the course of life they have completed, may through her providence be in a manner *born again*, and commence the career of a new existence."*—*Apuleius' Metamorph.*

Apuleius, after alluding to the pledge of secresy which binds him, proceeds to tell as much as he dare concerning the final process. "Listen," he says, "to what I shall relate. I approached the abode of death, with my foot I pressed the threshold of Pro-

* St Paul and other New Testament writers repeatedly draw illustrations from the rites employed in the mysteries—the new birth, the death unto sin and the life unto righteousness, the perfect man, &c., &c.

serpine's palace, — I was transported through the elements and conducted back again. At midnight I saw the bright light of the sun shining. I stood in the presence of the gods,—the gods of heaven and of the shades below,—ay, stood near and worshipped. And now have I only told thee such things that hearing thou necessarily canst not understand, and being beyond the comprehension of the profane,* I can enunciate without committing a crime."

The Royal Arch or Ark degree is virtually a copy of this final rite of initiation. It is here that the Masonic holy of holies is open to the newly admitted brother, or companion as he is now called. The actual vision of the goddess is however here replaced by the revelation of the most sacred and ineffable name of God. This, the legend of the rite relates, was discovered in the ruins of Solomon's Temple, by some master masons coming accidentally upon the perfect remains of an arch. Removing the keystone, they cast lots who should go down. The mason on whom the lot fell being let down by a rope, brought up a scroll, which proved to be the lost book of the law. Coming to another arch, they opened it, and here found a white marble pedestal, on which was a plate of gold, and on this plate were inscribed double triangles, in which was engraven the long lost sacred word of the Master Mason—the grand omnific Royal Arch word. This consisted in the triple name of God, JAO-BUL-ON—too sacred to be spoken in one

* Compare with this Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth, a city where these mysteries were periodically held. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect (initiated). . . . We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden (secret) wisdom. . . . Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

breath, so three Masons have to repeat it, taking each a syllable.

JAO or JAH was the Hebrew name of God, which the Jews were forbidden to pronounce; which the Book of Exodus relates was revealed to Moses, and which rabbinical tradition relates might only be uttered by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies on the great day of atonement, and then amid the sound of cymbals and trumpets, which prevented the people from hearing it. The Jews believed that this name possessed unbounded powers. "He who pronounces it, they say, shakes the heavens and earth, and inspires the very angels with astonishment and terror." They declare that a sovereign power attaches to this name; that it governs the world by its power. The Rabbins call it "Shem hamphoresh," the unutterable name, and say that David found it engraved on a stone while he was digging the foundations of the earth. (*Mackey's Lexicon*).—None dared to enter the temple of Serapis who did not bear on his breast or forehead the name Jao or J-ha-ho, a name almost equivalent in sound to that of the Hebrew Jehovah, and probably of identical import, and no name was uttered in Egypt with more reverence than this of *Jao*. In the hymn which the hierophant or guardian of the sanctuary sung to the initiated this was the first explanation given of the nature of the Deity. "He is one and by himself, and to him alone do all things owe their existence. (*From the German of Schiller, quoted in "Time and Faith."*)—Bul or Bel was the name of God among the Phenicians, and signifies lord or master. On was the name under which the sun was worshipped in Egypt, so the city ON was called by the Greek Heliopolis. Joseph's wife was a daughter of Potipherah, a priest of On. Thus Dag-on signifies the fish god. Mr Brown, in his recently published little book, "Poseid-on," a deity allied to the Latin Neptune, says with regard

to the word On or Aun: "Its Egyptian sense is the enlightener, teacher, or instructor, of which the sun is the natural type. The Semitic root, "an," signifies primarily labour or energy, especially procreative power. Hence the Aun is the great enlightener or teacher, and also the procreator of all, from whom all spring or are descended, according to the saying, 'Omnia ex ovo,' all things from the egg, ôön, aun." The word Aun transposed is the equivalent of Noah, and Mr Brown traces an identity of character between the Aun and the Babylonian fish god Oannes, whom he also identifies with Noah, as the enlightener as well as the procreator of the world. It is this triple name of deity, JAO-BUL-ON, involving the full description of his attributes,—the philosophy of the creation and government of the world, the existence of one sole and supreme God, the creator of all things, the father of all men, the all-wise, the all-good, the eternal, who was, and is, and is to be,—that constitutes the grand secret or sacred wisdom enshrined in the Royal Arch * Degree. "The fear of the Lord," says a Hebrew writer, "is the beginning of wisdom." It was in the sense of their teaching the true law of life, and unveiling the providential governance of the universe, that the mysteries of Paganism were the shrine of secret wisdom. This knowledge that God is one, that the soul is immortal, that the practice of righteousness is its true salvation, is the secret wisdom of which Freemasonry boasts, and this wisdom is a portion of the Mythos of the Ark.

Godfrey Higgins ("Anacalypsis," vol. i., page 73), shews that the Hebrew ראש is represented by the Greek αρχη, and that it has the meaning of "wisdom" as well as "beginning," that in fact the accredited authority

* The word "arch" in the sense of wisdom has passed into the familiar language of daily life. We call a shrewd person "arch," and more vulgarly say he is "an old one," an ancient, *i.e.*, an arkite.

of the Jews the Jerusalem Targum renders the first verse of Genesis thus, "By wisdom God created the world,"—a rendering which the account of wisdom given in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs amply justifies. Throughout all the east Noah was held in reverence as a divine lawgiver, and Vernon Harcourt asserts ("Doctrine of the Deluge") Noah was one and the same, as shown by etymological identity of name, with the great traditional lawgivers or patriarchs of the Gentile world, Menu in India, Minos in Greece, Menes in Egypt, and Numa in Rome. The ark also was one with the moon, and while in the ancient religions the sun symbolised divine power, the moon symbolised the spirit or wisdom of God. Both spirit and wisdom are feminine, and hence are allied to the goddesses Isis, Astarte, Juno, &c., of whom the moon was the symbol, and who, notwithstanding their multiform names were one and the same goddess—the great mother of nature. But Athena and Pallas in Greece, and Neith the tree goddess of Egypt, and Minerva among the Romans, were goddesses of wisdom,* and thus it is that the ark of which these goddesses were the type, was not only like them the symbol of fertility, but was the symbol of divine wisdom also. Noah, the genius of the ark, is the root of the Greek word νους, signifying wisdom, while the moon, the intermediate and connecting symbol, has a similar sense. Men in the Greek is the moon, and from this comes the Latin *mens*, the mind, and *mensis*, a month, "*Menes*" and "*Minos*," the wise legislators of antiquity are allied to the same root. The moon was the great measurer of time, of weeks and months, whence the word mensuration, and as the priestesses who gave the divine oracles in a fit of frenzy or madness were supposed to be under the influence of the moon, we have the words maniac and lunatic denoting

* Our seats of learning are called to this day "Alma Mater" by those who have been educated in them.

an insane person, a person of disordered mind; moreover the Latin *mensa*, a table, carries us again into close relation with the altar or ark. The term manes, as applied to the dead and to the infernal gods, to the ghosts or spirits of the dead in hades, is in the same connection with "mens" and "meen" and "menes." It relates to the people in the ark or tomb, and is thus connected with both moon and ark. The crescent moon was the universal emblem of the goddesses of antiquity, of whom the ark with the germs of life within it was a symbol also. Mythologically, therefore, they have one and the same significance, and thus the picture of the virgin by Albert Durer representing a beautiful woman with the crescent symbol, is a picture that represents not the mother of Jesus, but the beautiful woman that was worshipped in the ancient world, and of whom the moon and the ark were symbols. This crescent is to-day the well-known symbol of the Mahometan faith—a faith which sprung up among the self-same Arabian tribes of idolaters, who, making cakes* wherewith to celebrate the worship of the queen of heaven, gave to the corrupt Christian church of the fourth century the idea of making the mother of Christ a goddess under the title of the Virgin Mary.†

Had space permitted it would have been possible largely to have extended the evidence which has here been adduced in proof of the mythological identity of Noah's ark with the moon and goddess worship of antiquity, and with the cultus of the Virgin Mary in modern times. It has, however, been fully shown that the story of the Ark and Flood,

* See Jeremiah vii. 18.

† In time of deepest trouble and affliction prayers are offered in the Romish Church to the Blessed Virgin—the genius or goddess of the ark of salvation. Mr Hislop, in "The Two Babylons," p. 401, gives a prayer offered by the Archbishop of Turin in 1855, on account of the ravages of the vine disease, which were spreading ruin through the country, addressed conjointly to Noah and the Blessed Virgin.

given in the Book of Genesis, is simply a tradition or legend founded on an ancient mythological fancy or fable, and is not what Englishmen are taught to regard it as being, a supernatural revelation from the eternal God, only and specially given to the Jewish people. We have seen that it constituted the mythos which was unfolded in the ancient mysteries, where the hiding of Noah in the ark typified physical death, and in a spiritual sense death to all the passions and vices of human nature; while his release from the ark typified the resurrection from the dead and the new birth of the soul. The original meaning of all being a symbolic representation of the death of the sun-god in Autumn,* his sojourn in the tomb during the sterile and stormy months of winter, his resurrection to life and fertility and joy and gladness in the bright and happy festival of the opening spring. Our Good-Friday mournings for the death of Jesus, and our Easter rejoicings for his resurrection, are Pagan celebrations adapted to Christian purposes.* The death of Jesus or Christ was, simply, the death of a good man, was a death that knew no restoration to human life, for resurrection of this kind is not accorded to our human nature.† The spirit of a man does not die at all, and, therefore finding continued life needs

* The Pagan goddess "Freya," from which our Friday takes its name, and from whose worship our Good-Friday derives its custom of cross buns, is simply a form of Astarte or Venus or Isis. The cross marked on the cakes is the Grecian ×, not the cross of Christian reverence †. It has the significance of fertility. The cakes offered to Astarte were called boun, whence our word bun, from the Greek *βους*, an ox. The ox was sacred to Isis. The Tauribolia or baptismal rites in bullock's blood were sacred to the Eleusinian goddess. Our town of Oxford was once the site of a temple dedicated to Isis. It now stands on the banks of the river Isis, on the spot, where during the Roman rule, a temple of Isis stood. The ox sacred to Isis now appears in the name and also in the arms of the city. The Bull was a prominent feature in the cherubim that overshadowed the Jewish ark of the covenant.

† Consult English Life of Jesus, by T. Scott, Esq., new edition, pp. 316-319.

no resurrection. The idea of a dying God was a Pagan idea, and is a huge fallacy when understood in a literal sense, though it becomes a sublime truth when its esoteric or hidden meaning is perceived. It is taught, however, in its grossest and crudest and falsest sense to English minds to-day, and our Good-Friday celebrations to mourn the crucifixion of Jesus as the death of a god lie open to the reproof which Xenophanes, B.C. 520, gave to the Egyptian priests. Holding himself enlightened views as to the oneness and spirituality and eternity of God, he questioned the priests concerning the meaning of the mournings in which they indulged at the celebration of the death of Osiris, and was naturally puzzled at their grief for the sufferings of one they called a god. He could not understand how Osiris could have two natures, one human and one divine, and he argued with them "that if they thought him a man they should not worship him, while if they thought him a god they should cease to talk of his sufferings."—(*Sharpe's History of Egypt.*)

It has been shown that this mythos of death and resurrection, elevated from a physical to a moral atmosphere, understood as relating to the new birth or regenerate spirit of man, to the human and godlike principles that unite in his nature, to the struggle of the quickened soul to leave the thraldom of the body, and to find the freedom of the spirit, to rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness was the secret wisdom which the ancient mysteries enshrined. In this sense the mythos of the ark has passed from the ancient mysteries to the baptismal and communion services of the Christian church; services which every student of early Christian history knows were copies of heathen usages and rites. We have thus traced the Arkite mystery and shown it to be one and the same with the secret rites of Freemasons as practised in their lodges at the present day. In a word, we have in the story of the ark, when it is properly comprehended, the germ and development of

man's religious nature. The story of the struggles of humanity to find out God, the record of the ceaseless strivings of the human soul after the life of virtue and goodness which alone can entitle it to immortality. In unfolding the mythology of the ark, it has become necessary to unfold the hidden meaning of Masonry, to shew the secret wisdom which it professes to enshrine. Practically, this is unknown to masons themselves, their rites, like the rites of antiquated churches, have become for the most part empty and meaningless forms; the lectures delivered in the lodges, put often a secondary meaning into these rites, so that they now only serve as a crude illustration for a few trite moral maxims, and Freemasonry as it exists in England is simply a benefit association for the wealthy classes, or an order of good fellowship, and it has as little to do with *secret wisdom*, as a lodge of Foresters or Oddfellows. Its signs and passwords are its only real secrets and these none but the members of the masonic brotherhood ought to wish to know. They are, however, trivial matters of no more general concern than the private marks which houses of business employ. Freemasonry in its true meaning is a church, not a benefit society. Its worship is the grand religion of nature, Spiritual Pantheism, the religion of which Noah, Menu, Menes, Buddha, Socrates, Christ, and Paul, and the great, and good, and wise, of every age and of every land are and have been the preachers. It is the opponent of all narrow and exclusive theological faiths, and though it is itself in its organisation a sect, yet its platform is one on which men of every faith and of every clime may meet. It is the old arkite religion existing in our midst in almost the purity of its ancient form; and if a living soul were put into it to-day, if Freemasons knew that their system was a religion, and not a mere social club, they would inaugurate a religious reformation and lay the foundation stones of a universal church. That which of old Noah was fabled to have found in the

ark when the deluge was destroying all things else, rest, peace, salvation, the enlightened devotee of the old world religions, the worshipper of Isis and Osiris, of Ceres and Bacchus, of the Persian Mithras and the Syrian Adonis found in the innermost recesses of the temple after he had borne the penances and privations of the initiatory rites ; so the Jew found this peace on the day of atonement, when the veil was uplifted from the holy of holies, and the Ark of God was seen, and the Christian reaches an ark of rest and finds a refuge from the ills of life, an assurance of the salvation his soul seeks, when he kneels before the altar at which mass is celebrated, or sits at the sacred table around which the brethren of the church assemble. And thus in like manner the Freemason has a sacred shrine, around which all his hopes and aspirations centre, and in the revelation which is made to him in the Royal Arch degree of the sacred name by which the power, and attributes, and love, and wisdom of the Great Architect, and framer, and upholder of the universe are described ; of the path of duty he himself is to pursue, of the virtues he should practise, the hopes he should cherish and the trust he should display ; he finds an oasis in life's desert, an ark of safety amid the boisterous waves of its trouble and its strife ; for here, as in the holiest sanctuary of the church, the true word of life is, or ought to be, sounded in his ears, the true guidance is, or ought to be, found, the divine mystery is, or ought to be unveiled, and the purposes of Providence made clear. Here at last the temple of truth is, to his thought, reached, of truth that quickens the angel nature of the man, and that through a life of love and virtue, and purity on earth, conducts him to the life that is everlasting. Here he thinks salvation is attained, the haven of safety reached. And so he feels that—

> Here he can bathe his weary soul
> In seas of heavenly rest,
> And not a wave of trouble roll
> Across his peaceful breast.

The following extract from a letter from T. L. Strange, Esq., Malvern, late a Judge of the High Court of Madras, to a friend, who had forwarded him a copy of the "Mythos of the Ark," and inserted now with his kind permission, strikingly corroborates what has been said in pages 40, 41.

"I have read a good portion of Mr. Lake's "Mythos of the Ark," and see that it is full of interesting matter, especially on the subject of Masonry. Two Royal Arch-Masons. in my part of India, at a considerable interval of time, got admission into the Shrines of Hindu Temples, through the use of the sacred word, AUM, (pronounced Ome) their hidden name for God. One of them told me that he saw within the shrine distinct masonic symbols, intermixed with Hindu idolatrous ones, and that they use the very same ceremonials as the Masons do when pronouncing the said secret name of Aum. He further told me that the Masons have two more words expressive of the name of God, adjoined to this Hindu one, one being derived from the Jews and one from the Egyptians. I see Mr Lake gives this triple word as JAO-BUL-ON, deriving it from Jewish, Phœnician and Egyptian sources, now it is clear from what I mention as to India, that Aum is one of the three words. Taking Mr. Lake to be well informed on the subject, I should identify the last word of the three he gives with the Indian Aum, and not the Egyptian On, there being a positive necessity for bringing in the Indian word. The subject is most interesting as showing the contact of nations at some very remote period, I doubt not the close alliance between the Egyptian Mysteries and Masonry and between the former and the Mythos of the Ark."

In a subsequent letter to the author, Mr. Strange, says, "I have written to my friend to furnish me with such information as he might be at liberty to give me respecting the Triune name for God, which you have in your "Mythos of the Ark." I did not venture to put the word before him but asked him whether he might tell me, in what order, as to nationality, the three names of God composing it stand. This he has done and it certainly supports you. It is thus;—

1st.	2nd.	3rd.
Jewish.	Assyrian or Babylonian.	Indian and Egyptian

Jao of course was first Phœnician, then Jewish; Bul, first

Chaldean and then Phœnician, and the last word, if Aum and On are to be identified, first Indian then Egyptian. But I feel a good deal of doubt on this latter subject, it strikes me that if the Egyptians had received this as a secret name for God, and passed it on to the Masons, they could not have have given it the publicity which they have given to On. My friend however, with the author of "Poseid-on," and the author of "The Book of God, the Apocalypse of Adam, Oannes," all identify "On" with "Aum"—.

Note by the Author,

Mr. Mackay (Lexicon of Freemasonry, p 158,) also identifies the Indian Aum with the Egyptian On, he says, "The Egyptians gave to the God 'On' the same attributes that the Hebrews bestowed on Jehovah, the word in Greek signifies BEING OR EXISTENCE, the same as the name Jehovah in Hebrew, THE HINDOOS USED THE WORD AUM OR AUN."

Godfrey Higgins (Anacalypsis, vol 1, p 110), identifies OM or AUM the not to be spoken word with the Egyptian On and the Hebrew Jehovah, and he adds, this is what is meant by the fourth commandment, which we render, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God, (but which ought to be Jehovah thy God) in vain."

Mr. Higgins also says, "that as a pious Jew will not utter the word Jehovah, so a pious Hindoo will not utter the word Om. The letters which represent it in its tri-literal form A.U M., stand the first for the Creator, the second for the Preserver, and the third for the Destroyer."

Dr. Oliver, in his 'Signs and Symbols' says, "the chief varieties of the sacred Name among ancient nations were Jah, and Bul or Baal, and ON or OM."

India was the source from which all the religions of the ancient world sprang. There the mythos of the ark took its rise, and thus it is that Freemasonry reproducing much of the ancient Egyptian ceremonies, reproduces also much that had its birth in the Hindoo temples of a remote antiquity.

It is easy to conceive how the Hindoo A.U.M, or OM may have become changed into the Egyptian ON, when Masonic writers tell us that in many of the Royal Arch Chapters the word ON is corrupted into LUN.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

MYTHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

OF

TREE AND SERPENT WORSHIP.

"Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it up on a pole."
SAYING OF JEHOVAH, IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

"They worshipped serpents void of reason."
BOOK OF WISDOM.

PUBLISHED BY THOMAS SCOTT,
MOUNT PLEASANT, RAMSGATE.
1870.

Price Sixpence.

TREE AND SERPENT WORSHIP.

A FEW months ago, under the sanction and assistance of the Indian Council, Mr Fergusson published a costly volume of engravings and photographs, with explanatory essays illustrating the mythological sculptures adorning some ancient remains of Buddhist architecture now existing in Central India, the Topes or funeral mounds of Sanchi and Amravati, dating about the first and fourth centuries of the Christian era. Although Mr Fergusson's researches were, in the first instance, conducted in the interests of architecture and art, yet the repeated appearance in these decorative sculptures (which, like the paintings of Egypt, represented scenes from the daily life and customary usages of the period to which they belonged) of the tree or the serpent, portrayed as objects of popular adoration, led him on to the study of the mythological significance of these emblems. Hence the splendid volume which he has recently published, and which he entitles "Tree and Serpent Worship, or Illustrations of Mythology and Art in India in the first and fourth centuries after Christ."

In a notice of an earlier work of Mr Fergusson's ("Picturesque Illustrations of Ancient Architecture") which appeared in the Journal of Sacred Literature for the year 1862, allusion is made to an engraving of one of the sculptured panels of the gateway of the Sanchi monument, on which is represented the worship of a Tree. This is seen placed on an altar, "before which devotees are prostrating themselves in prayer, while angels, with crowns of glory, are floating in

the air above. It is just such a scene as a fervid imagination might picture to itself before the high altar of a Roman Basilica, and such as Christian painters who love the poetry of their art are wont to represent. We have only to substitute the Cross for the Tree, and the resemblance would be complete."

Struck by this similitude, Mr Fergusson has devoted a portion of his recent volume to shewing the large use which has been made of Tree and Serpent symbols in almost every religious system which the world has known, not excepting the Hebrew and Christian. He also points out the prevalence of Serpent worship among the Hindoos and the semi-civilised tribes of Africa at the present day. It is the defect of Mr Fergusson's book that, while it calls attention to some very curious and very startling facts, it does not offer any sufficient or satisfactory explanation of them. If the worship of the Serpent or Tree was in ancient times so universal, it is evident that there must have been some sufficient reason for the practice. Mr Fergusson's abstinence from speculation is the more provoking when it is remembered that the recent investigations of students in comparative mythology have by no means failed in obtaining light upon the subject. But, though giving us little of his own thought, he does not fail to utilise the labours of others.

"The worship of the serpent," he quotes from Mr Bathurst Deane's admirable work, published early in the present century, "may be traced in almost every religion through ancient Asia, Europe, Africa, and America, and its prevalence is only to be accounted for on the supposition that a corrupted tradition of the Serpent in Paradise had been handed down from generation to generation," and that, consequently, all the serpent symbolisms found in the heathen mythologies were distorted copies of this narrative. We can accept Mr Deane's collection of facts, though we feel ourselves obliged to repudiate his theories. Mr Deane wrote his

book at a time when it was the custom to assume the Book of Genesis to be the oldest literature in the world. The fallacy of this assertion, however, is now too well known to need exposure. The religions of Egypt and of India date from a period long anterior to the infancy of the Jewish nation, and in the ancient Hindoo theology, as now in the modern Hindoo religion, the serpent was one of the most frequent symbols. "How great and how general," says Mr Maurice, in his 'History of Hindostan,' vol. i., p. 68, "was the veneration of the serpent in ancient times throughout Hindoostan, is evident in every page of their mythologic history, in which almost every fabulous personage of note is represented as grasping or as environed with a serpent." In this theology the serpent, though more or less associated with Brahma and with Vishnu, was yet especially the symbol of the terrific Siva, the destroying yet regenerating member of the Hindoo Trimurti or Trinity. The Hindoo philosophy discerned that death was closely associated with reproduction, so it made the god of destruction to have a beneficent as well as an evil character. Hence the serpent has come in the mythological systems of other nations to bear a double signification, to be sometimes the symbol of beneficence and healing, as in the serpent of Æsculapius, and sometimes the symbol of malevolence and destruction, as in the Persian Ahriman, or the Devil of Christian theology.*

In the serpent worship of ancient times the serpent was regarded as the symbol of a beneficent God. It represented wisdom, reproduction, eternity, life, generation, &c. Thus the great creating spirit of the Egyptian

* In the early Hindoo theology, and in the Hindoo religion of the present day, Siva, the terrific god of destruction, is *worshipped*, and the serpent that represents him is a symbol that is *honoured*. The Persian Ahriman and the Devil of modern theology are distinguished from the good and beneficent deity, and are contemned instead of being worshipped. The serpent, as a symbol of Siva, however, represented reproduction rather than destructiveness—life not death.

mythology, the primordial Cneph, was symbolised by a serpent. The name Cneph, Jacob Bryant* derives from Can Oph, the serpent of the sun ; the great or chief or royal serpent. The serpent occupies a very prominent place in the celebrated Egyptian symbol of Divine Providence, which is found adorning the portico of every Egyptian temple, viz., a winged globe with serpents issuing from it. Here the serpent represented the creative wisdom of God, that principle of wisdom issuing from the Father (the globe), by which the world was made,—the wings in this symbol signified the divine omnipresence, the pervading energy of God, the Holy Spirit. In all the ancient philosophic or mythological systems, the ideas of creation and of wisdom were closely and inseparably associated, and the serpent was the symbol of both. The earliest conception of the divine wisdom arose from the wonder excited in the minds of men as they contemplated the mysterious power with which animals and plants are invested, of reproducing their species. Hence the earliest worship was nature worship, and the pervading thought of this worship centered around these wonderful generative or productive powers.

"It is remarkable," says Dean Milman in his 'History of Christianity,' "how widely, almost universally extended throughout the early world, appears the institution of a solemn period of mourning about the autumnal, and of rejoicing about the vernal equinox. The suspension or apparent extinction of the great vivifying power of nature, Osiris or Iacchus ; the destitution of Ceres, Isis, or the earth, of her husband, or her beautiful daughter torn in pieces, or carried away into their realms by the malignant powers of darkness, their reappearance in all their bright and fertilising agency, these different forms were the great annual fast and festival of the early heathen worship."

* Analysis of the ancient mythology.

Goethe gives utterance to a very similar idea. He says—

"The Utilitarians suspect you of an intention of robbing them of their God, if you object to their adoring Him who gave horns to the ox wherewith to defend itself, but I humbly beg to be allowed to adore Him whose creative wealth permitted him to create, after many thousand plants, a plant in which all the rest are contained, and to produce, after many thousand species of animals, a being which contains them all, viz., man.

"It is customary to adore Him who gives the cattle its food and meat and drink according to its wants; but I adore Him who gave the world such astonishing powers of production, that though but the millionth part of them be exerted, the world is so crowded with beings, that wars and pestilence, deluges and conflagrations, cannot prevail against them."

The thought that commanded the admiration and reverence of Goethe was the thought that prompted the earliest idea of worship. The Hindoo Vedas, the oldest religious books which the world possesses, bear ample testimony to the fact that nature worship, the worship that sees God in surrounding objects, in the wonderful powers and properties that these manifest, was the basis of the earliest religions of which human records tell. Of this nature worship we shall show the Tree and the Serpent to have been the chief and special symbols, and these were reverenced because they were conceived of as being typical of the reproductive powers of vegetable and animal life. The choice of the Tree for this purpose seems to be very natural and appropriate; why the serpent should have been chosen does not so clearly appear. We have, however, abundant testimony that the serpent, when used as a religious symbol, was made to bear this signification; that in the earlier mythologies it typified the reproductive energy of animal life, and that later on, as these mytho-

logies became more recondite, and as religious speculation assumed a more philosophic character, the serpent became the symbol of creative power and of Divine wisdom. Thus Mr. Fergusson throughout his book speaks of Tree worship as being the sister religion to Serpent worship, and he endeavours to show that while in India the two are repeatedly found together, yet, by a species of mythological selection, the Aryan races of the Western world have almost invariably preferred the Tree symbol before the Serpent symbol, and that consequently in the mythologies of northern Europe we find repeated evidences of Tree worship and but few indications of Serpent worship, moreover the Serpent in these mythologies has an evil significance and occupies a degraded position. Yet Europe takes its name from the serpent, signifies the great or chief serpent, while in this country the remains of a great serpent-temple are still to be seen at Abury in Wiltshire. The word Abury is virtually the name Europe transposed, and it also signifies the great serpent.

Dr. Stukely, in a letter to Mr. Gale of Stamford, dated June 25th, 1730, which I find quoted by Dr. Oliver in his lecture on Masonic Signs and Symbols, and also by the learned author of the "Book of God," says, "The stupendous temple at Abury, in Wiltshire, is a picture of Deity,—most particularly of what they anciently called the Father and the Word who created all things. This figure you will find on the top of all the obelisks. A snake proceeding from a circle is a procession of the Son (or Divine Wisdom) from the great First Cause."

The Rev. Bathurst Deane, to whose work on Serpent Worship allusion has already been made, says, "From a circle of upright stones, erected at equal distances, proceeded two avenues in a wavy course, in opposite directions; these were the fore and hinder parts of the serpent's body passing from west to east. Within this great circle were four others considerably

smaller ; the head of the serpent was formed of two concentric ovals, and rested on an eminence which is the southern promontory of the Hackpen* (Serpent's-head) hills."

Mr. Jacob Bryant, in his "Analysis of the Ancient Mythology," says that the word "Ab," which in Hebrew means Father, has also the same meaning as the Egyptian "Ob," or "Aub," and signifies a "Serpent"—thus etymologically uniting the two ideas.

The fact that, in connection with the Druidical religion, serpent worship established itself in this country, and has left a vivid memorial of its presence in the Abury ruins, serves as a sufficient witness of its prevalence in the ancient world. Our object, however, is to ascertain its meaning. The serpent was, in all the old worships, the symbol of the Deity; if, therefore, we discover the hidden significance which attached to this symbol, we shall be able to throw considerable light upon the early forms of religious thought, and possessing the first link, we shall find it a great help towards comprehending the subsequent development of religious doctrine.

As a religious symbol the serpent had several meanings, all associated with ideas relating to eternity, reproduction, wisdom, life, &c. M. Lajard, in his "Recherches sur le culte de Venus," says, "The word which signifies 'life' in the greater part of the semitic languages signifies also 'a serpent.'"

In the ancient mythologies of the more northerly European nations, the Tree is much more conspicuous as a religious symbol than is the Serpent. A Tree of Knowledge and a Tree of Life are here continually met with as sacred symbols, while the serpent as an object of direct worship is far less frequent. From an article on 'Sacred Trees,' in the 'Journal of Sacred Literature,' for 1862, we make the following quotations in

* From "Pen," head, and "Hag," the old English word for serpent. "Anacalypsis," by Godfrey Higgins.

support of the prevalence of Tree symbolism or Tree worship in the ancient religious systems.

"The fact of a certain Tree of Life being introduced at the commencement of the sacred records by one who had been carefully educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, would lead one to suppose that the Egyptians themselves possessed a knowledge of such a Tree.* On the sacred monuments of the ancient Egyptians we do find a Tree having a relation to the life in Paradise, and furnishing therein the required support of immortality. The monuments of the ancient Assyrians† also show a sacred Tree, symbolical of the divine influence of the *life-giving* Deity."

"The most generally received symbol of life is a tree, as also the most appropriate, and as we recognise two different forms of life—a spiritual life, the life of the soul, and a physical life, the life of the body—so these may be represented either by two trees, as sometimes found (the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life), or, in reference to universal life, by one tree alone."

"As a symbolical tree of universal life, the ash 'Yggdrasill,' the mundane tree of the Scandinavian mythology claims the pre-eminence. It is described in the Eddas as the greatest and best of trees. Its triple root reaches to the mythic regions of the frost giants and the Æsir, and penetrates the nebulous niflheim ; its majestic stem overtops the heavens, and its branches fill the world. It is sprinkled with the purest water, whence is the dew that falls in the dales, and its life-giving energy is diffused throughout all nature. This tree is evidently a symbol of that inscrutable power which is the life of all things—thus representing, under an arborescent form, the most ancient

* There are reasons for believing that the early chapters of the Book of Genesis were borrowed from a Chaldean rather than from an Egyptian source.

† For a full exposition of the symbolical meaning of the Assyrian Tree, see Dr Inman's "Ancient Faiths, embodied in Ancient Names."

theory of Nature, analogous to that personified in the Indian Parvati, the goddess of life and reproduction; in the Egyptian Isis, and in the figure so frequently met with in the museums of Italy, called the Diana of the Ephesians,* a variety of the Indian Bhavani."

"The sacred tree of the ancient British people was the oak—the tree sacred to Druidical worship. The oak in Palestine was regarded as the emblem of the Divine covenant." (This, however, had another symbol among the early Jews, which closely allies the tree with the prevalent Nature worship of the ancients). "It is also worthy of remark that the same Hebrew word *alah*, which signifies an *oak*, means also an *oath*, and the root of this word is *al*, mighty or strong, the origin of the name of Deity in many of the ancient languages." Among the Greeks the oak of Dodona was the seat of the oldest Hellenic oracle, and the priests sent forth their decrees on its leaves.

The figure of Nutpi or Neith, the goddess of Divine life, was represented on the sepulchral monuments of the Egyptians as seated among the branches of the 'Tree of Life' in the paradise of Osiris, and represented the goddess dispensing the divine sustenance of the immortal soul.

The 'Hom,' the sacred tree of the Persians, is spoken of in the Zendavesta as the "Word of Life," as the author of salvation and as the announcer of it,—as the Tree of Life and as the source of the living water of life. "The plant 'Hom,' when consecrated, is regarded as the mystical body of God, and when partaken of as a sacrament is received as the veritable food of eternal life."

The 'Hom,' when thus consecrated, was supposed to give life, and when partaken of by the worshippers was regarded in the same light as Christians have since regarded their Eucharist, viz., as the substance of God

* This figure was an image of the goddess Multimammia, or the many-breasted virgin. See Montfaucon's plates.

eaten by man. The mistletoe of the Druids may have received an analogous importance, and have been looked upon in the same light. The Druids gathered the sacred mistletoe of the oak at Yule-tide (Christmas), and this annual ceremony was a very high festival. When cut with a golden sickle the mistletoe was received with extreme reverence on a white cloth, extraordinary *life-giving* powers were ascribed to it, and great importance was attached to receiving a portion of it. That all this had a meaning no one could doubt. Dr. Stukely says that the custom of the Druids was still in his time preserved in the north, and was practised lately at York. "On the eve of Christmas day," he remarks, "they carry mistletoe to the high altar of the cathedral and proclaim a public and universal liberty." Mistletoe still retains a popular place in our Christmas festivities. Its associations, we may add, point very forcibly to the Nature worship from which it originated.

The "Christmas Tree," which of late has become so familiar in our English homes, is no new custom, but the revival of a remnant of the ancient Tree symbolism, or Tree worship, of which we are now speaking. Though coming to us directly from Germany, it is a custom which had its origin in Egypt, and which dates from a period long anterior to the birth of Christ, and consequently has no specific relation to that event. It was a popular notion among the ancient Egyptians that the Palm tree put forth a shoot every month, and a spray of this tree with twelve shoots upon it was used in Egypt at the time of the winter solstice as a symbol of the completed year.

The Tree Goddess Neith, to whom we have alluded, was especially worshipped at Sais in Egypt, a city celebrated in mythological history for its feast of lights. From the lights that were used on this occasion, the Roman Catholic custom of using candles in religious worship was derived, and from this feast of lights with which the Tree Goddess of Sais was worshipped has been

derived the custom of decorating the Christmas Tree with candles. A very significant proof of the Egyptian origin of this custom is derived from the fact that in Germany a Pyramid, a figure that in Egypt had the same mythological meaning as the Tree, is often substituted in place of a tree.

The worship of trees was forbidden in France by the ecclesiastical councils of the middle ages, and in England by the laws of Canute. A learned antiquarian writing on this subject (see Journal of Sacred Literature, 1862), says, "that the English maypole decked with coloured rags and tinsel, and the merry morice-dancers (the gaily decorated may sweeps) with the mysterious and now almost defunct personage, Jack in the green, are the all but worn out remnants of the adoration of gods in trees that once was sacred in England."

In this connection it is well to remark that Mr. Fergusson relates that along the top rail of the Sanchi Tope or funeral mound runs a kind of serpentine moulding upborne by human figures, and at this very day he tells us a similar kind of wavy roll made of rags and paper, gaily coloured, is borne aloft on men's shoulders at the funeral of a Burman priest. Mr. Sharpe in his interesting little volume, 'Egyptian Mythology,' describes "a serpent of numerous folds borne aloft by men, as constituting one of the monuments of the Egyptians relating to renewed or eternal life."

A sufficiency of evidence has, we think, now been adduced to show that the tree and serpent were significant and interchangeable symbols of that worship which deified the generative or productive powers of nature, and that often they stood as visible representations of God. We proceed, therefore, to show the expansion of this symbolism in subsequent mythological and philosophical systems; how the tree became the Cross and the Phallus, and how the serpent-symbol passed into the 'Logos,' or 'Memra,'; that is, how divine wisdom became the divine word, and how all these

symbols, tree, serpent, cross, phallus, logos, and memra, were in course of time regarded as symbolical of Christ, and eventually lost themselves in Christianity.

We have called attention to the fact that an ancient Buddhist sculpture represents an act of adoration of a character identical with the religious ceremonial of the Roman Catholic Church, except that a tree was used in the place of a cross as the central symbol of the rite. The cross and the tree, however, are synonymous symbols. In Christian literature we very often find the cross spoken of as a tree, as though the terms were interchangeable, as, indeed, they are. Thus in the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Peter, speaking of Jesus says, "whom they slew and hanged on *a tree*," (επι ξύλου). Under this word Dr Parkhurst, in his Lexicon has the following remarks. "In Revelations Ξυλον της ζωης, "the Tree of Life" denotes Christ as being the author of eternal life; while in the following quotation from 'Hymns Ancient and Modern,' the cross and the tree are evidently in the common language of Christian worship interchangeable terms.

> "Christ by coward hands betrayed,
> Christ for us a captive made,
> Christ upon the bitter *tree*,
> Slain for man, be praise to Thee."

Again,

> "See His hands and feet are fastened,
> So he makes His people free.
> Not a wound whence blood is flowing,
> But a fount of grace shall be;
> Yea the very nails which nail Him,
> Nail us also to the Tree.

The following has been submitted to my notice in this connection. It is from the 'Hymnal Noted' by the Rev. R. Roper, and complaint was made to the Bishop of Exeter concerning it in June 1857. It is questionable, however, whether it would be made a matter of complaint *now*—

"Faithful cross! above all others,
One and only noble tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peer may be;
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron!
Sweetest weight is hung on thee.

"Bend thy boughs; O Tree of Glory!
Thy relaxing sinews bend,
For a while the ancient vigour
That thy birth bestowed, suspend;
And the King of Heavenly beauty
On thy bosom gently tend."

The origin of this strange compound of heathenism and Christianity is to be found in a hymn written in the sixth century by Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers. From the concluding portion of this the following lines are taken, of which the verses just quoted are a literal translation.

"Crux fidelis, inter omnes arbor una nobilis,
Silva talem nulla profert fronde, flore, germine
Dulce ferrum, dulce lignum, dulce pondus sustinent.

"Flecte ramos arbor alta, tensa laxa viscera
Et rigor lentescat ille quem dedit nativitas,
Et superni membra regis tende miti stipite.

Thus it is that the Tree of Life becomes the Cross, the "wood whence salvation cometh."

It is now well-known to the learned that the Cross is a pre-Christian symbol. Not, indeed, till the third century of the Christian era was the figure of a Cross used as a symbol in Christian worship, it was then used in baptism for purposes of exorcism, the sign of the cross being supposed to possess great efficacy against all sorts of evils, and particularly against the machinations of evil spirits (See Mosheim). Not till nearly the sixth century was the "*crucifix*," the cross of the crucifixion, employed. Hitherto, from the third century, the cross used was the Pagan symbol, and it was employed in the sense attached to it in the old Pagan faiths, viz., deliverance from evil and eternal life. This cross was but the Tree symbol in another form, though after the sixth century it merged into the

Cross of Calvary. Nevertheless to this hour the meaning of the Cross in Christian usage retains very much of its old significance, and while on Good Friday it is regarded as the dolorous symbol of suffering and death, on Easter-day it becomes the symbol of resurrection and joy—the emblem of eternal life; in other words, while on Good Friday the Cross has its proper Christian significance, on Easter-day it inherits all the pleasing associations that belonged to its pagan prototype. The ancient cross was the same with the sign *tau*, which Ezekiel in his vision saw stamped as a mark of salvation on the foreheads of the faithful Jews (Ezek. chap. 9). The passage which in the English translation is rendered "set a mark," is thus given in the vulgate, "Et signa Thau (cross a cross) super frontes virorum gementium." This "thau" or "tau" T was the sign of eternal life, and under the name of the *crux ansata*, was placed in the hand of all the Egyptian gods as a symbol of their divinity. It was in fact the Phallus and Yoni combined, the latter being signified by the superadded ring. In the Samaritan form + this tau symbol was stamped on all the Hebrew coins,* and in this form it constituted the famous hammer of Thor, ✠ the Norse symbol of divinity. So, according to Longfellow, King Olaf, when keeping Christmas at Drontheim,

> "Oer his drinking horn, the sign
> He made of the cross divine,
> As he drank and muttered his prayers;
> But the Berserks evermore,
> Made the sign of the hammer of Thor
> Over theirs."

But these symbols, says Mr Baring Gould, in his

* In this form we see the origin of what is called the Greek cross the form of cross adopted by the Greek Church, and very largely employed in Church architecture and decorations in this country. This cross, it is evident, belongs to the old religions, the ancient sun or nature worship, and has no connection with the instrument on which Jesus suffered death.

"Myths of the Middle Ages," were the same, and he quotes the following story in proof.

"One of the Sagas describing the sacrifice at Lade, at which King Hakon, Athelston's foster son, was present relates: 'Now when the first goblet was filled, Earl Sigurd spoke some words over it, and blessed it in Odin's name, and drank to the king out of the horn; and the king then took it, and made the sign of the cross over it. Then said Kaare of Greyting, What does the king mean by doing so? will he not sacrifice? But Earl Sigurd, replied the king, is doing what all of you do who trust in your power and strength, for he is blessing the full goblet in the name of Thor, by making the sign of his hammer over it before he drinks it."

The Druids were accustomed to convert the sacred oak into the form of a cross, (and thus to make the tree and cross symbols identical,) by cutting off all the boughs and fixing the two larger ones into the stem at right angles to it, thus the form of a cross was produced, and over this was inscribed "Thau" (θέος). In the article on "Sacred Trees" before alluded to, there occurs the following paragraph—

"The Buddhists have their sacred trees. In Ceylon there is the '*bogaha*' or god's tree. Captain Wilford, in an article in the 10th volume of the Asiatic Researches, says that the "tree of life and knowledge," or the *Jambu* tree, is represented in the shape of a Manichean cross placed on a calvary. It is called the 'divine tree,' the 'tree of the gods.' When the tree is represented as a trunk without branches it is then said to be the seat of the Supreme One.* When two arms were added as in the Christian cross, than the Trimurti (Indian trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva), were said to be seated there."

* The Phallus was often worshipped under the form of a conical stone; the Obelisk and the Pyramid are symbols of a similar character. They had the same meaning as the Tree stem without branches, and symbolised the Great Father, God.

The parallel which this offers to the practice of the British Druids is very remarkable, as is also the resemblance of the latter form to the Christian cross.

The tree and cross are here found to be virtually the same symbols, implying the element of physical life, which was typical of the Creator in the early nature worship. We shall now proceed to show their identity as symbols of the higher intellectual life of the soul.

The tree of life is often used as a figure in the devotional literature of the Jews, having, however, no relation to the tree of which the Book of Genesis speaks. Thus, in the Book of Proverbs, wisdom (of which be it remembered the serpent was the universal symbol), is described as "a tree of life to them which lay hold upon her."

Mr Godfrey Higgins in his 'Anacalypsis,' says that our English word "book" has the derivation from the name of the heathen god "Bacchus." The Latin word *liber*, which signifies a book, whence our word library, or collection of books, is derived, was also one of the names of this god Bacchus. From *liber* is also derived our word "liberty," signifying in its higher sense the freedom which knowledge confers; the freedom which was given to slaves, and the general liberty or licence which was allowed at the festival or orgies of Bacchus, may, in connection with the other meaning that the name *liber* bears, have originated the custom formerly observed in this country of conferring liberty, or securing freedom or exemption from punishment to the learned under the title "benefit of the clergy." But *liber* signifies also the bark or inner rind of a tree, on which books were originally written. Thus we have one name signifying a tree, a god, and a book. It is owing to this connection of a tree with a book that we speak of the leaves of a book as we do of the leaves of a tree, and the similarity is preserved in the Latin, when we speak of the folios of a book and of the foliage of a tree. Again, the word edition used with reference to

books, derived from the Latin *edo,* I eat, allies the idea of books with the fruit of the tree; thus the tree of knowledge becomes the book of wisdom, and as we have a *tree* of life, so we have also the conception of a book of life, and the tree spoken of in the Revelations, whose leaves were to be for the healing of the nations, is simply a symbol for the "Book of Life."

In the mythologies of the eastern as distinguished from the western world the serpent held a more conspicuous place, was the higher symbol as drawn from the animal creation. The tree most commonly symbolised physical life, while the serpent had the added meaning of spiritual life.

"In almost all the emblematical groups of the Indians," we meet, says Godfrey Higgins, "with the serpent in some shape or other. When it has its tail in its mouth no doubt it is the emblem of eternity. But though it is admirable for this purpose that is but a small part of its meaning. It is worthy of observation that it is found in very nearly the oldest of the Buddhist monuments; and the serpent most particularly chosen in India, and often found in Egypt, where it is not a native, is the cobra, or naga, or hooded snake. This Buddhist foreigner in Egypt sufficiently shews that the Buddhist worship came to Egypt before the invention of hieroglyphics. It is always found in connection with the linga as the emblem of the creative power."—(*Anacalypsis*, vol. i. p. 544). We pass now to consider serpent worship as it existed among the ancient Hebrews. In the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament we have repeated evidence that prior to the Babylonish captivity the Hebrew worship was a mixture of Paganism and Judaism, and that Jehovah was often worshipped in connection with the heathen deities.

"It is remarkable," says Dr S. Davidson, "that the fundamental doctrine of Mosaism, viz., that there is but one God—the creator and preserver of all, invisible,

eternal, omnipotent, holy, and just—was all along inadequately apprehended till the captivity. A few choice spirits grasped it with sufficient distinctness, and adhered to it, while to the mass of the people Jehovah was no more than a superior God beside other deities. Polytheism had deeply penetrated the vulgar mind, and though the nation frequently sought Jehovah with convictions of sin and repentance, such conversions, called forth by external circumstances, were transient in their effects. A manifold idolatry, partly of Zabian and partly of Egyptian origin, had its altars in all the cities of the land, in the streets of Jerusalem, and in the very temple of Jehovah immediately before the exile, as we learn from Jeremiah (chaps. vii., xliv). There is no evidence to show that the ceremonial law was observed by the Jews with anything like regularity or strictness. The great feasts themselves, such as the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, &c., were allowed to fall into desuetude, as the historical books attest. If the externals of religion were negligently attended to, religion itself must have been sickly."—(*Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 340).*

That during the reigns of the Jewish kings serpent worship prevailed among the Hebrew people is evidenced by the fact recorded of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 3) that "he removed the high places, and brake the

* See also "The Worship of Baalim in Israel," by Dr. H. Oort, translated by the Bishop of Natal. On page 46 the Bishop supplies the following note with reference to the idol, or Ashera, erected by Maacha, the mother of King Asa—(see 1 Kings xv., 13)—the proper translation of which should be, 'She, Asa's mother, made on the Ashera something detestable.' "It seems plain that the Ashera was in reality a phallus, like the Linga of the Hindoos—the male symbol employed as a sign of the fertilizing and life-giving power of the Sun. It was exhibited in various forms, sometimes in rude representations of the organ itself, but usually in a more refined form, as the trunk of a tree, dead or living, a pillar, &c." We forbear, for obvious reasons, further quotation, and refer the student to the work itself.

images, and cut down the groves (Ashera), and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made : for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it, and he called it Nehushtan."*

We have here the most positive evidence of the existence of serpent worship among the Hebrew people as late as the days of Hezekiah. The image was an effigy of a serpent set on a pole, associated that is with a phallic emblem. The story of Moses having erected this effigy in the wilderness some 800 years previously is simply a legend framed in later ages to explain, and in some degree to excuse the practice of this idolatry, the Book of Numbers, in which this incident is recorded, being not only modern in date, but unhistorical in character. The serpent on a pole is virtually the serpent on a tree. It is Divine wisdom on the symbol of productive life, and forms one of the most expressive and most recondite of all the symbols of the ancient world.

The crude ideas of Nature worship found a refined expression in the ancient philosophical systems both of India and Greece. The fecund principle of Nature became, as the idea of a Divine personality grew up, the creative energy of God ; and this creative energy was symbolised in the philosophy of Plato by the Divine wisdom or Word of God. By this was meant the operating power of God, and, by means of this, (a something distinct from the Divine essence—something emanating from the Divine essence)—it was thought that God made the world. Plato's chief God—the eternal and self-existent Father—like the Hindoo Brahma, was conceived of as pure spirit; that which comes into contact with matter—the maker

* In a note on this word in the "Old Testament History," edited by Dr. W. Smith, the writer says, "Ashtoreth is perhaps the proper name of the goddess, while Ashera is the name of the image or symbol of the goddess. *There was perhaps a connection between this symbol or image and the sacred symbolic tree, the representation of which occurs so frequently in Assyrian sculptures.*"

and former of the world—was conceived of as an emanation from the eternal Father, the Demiurgos or Logos, the word or wisdom of God. God, it was thought, not directly, but by his wisdom, his first-born and only-begotten Son, made the world. That which in the popular worship was symbolised by the serpent, Plato, in his philosophy, symbolised by the conception of the Logos, the word or wisdom of God.

About two centuries before the Christian era the streams of Hebrew and Grecian thought met and mingled at Alexandria, and in the presence of the refined speculations of Plato concerning deity, the Jews grew ashamed of those early traditions which their literature contained, which represented God in the grossness of a human form, so they imagined a personification of the Divine wisdom called "Sophia," and said that God made the world by this Sophia or wisdom, and that he appeared to Abraham and Noah by his angel or word—both terms having the identical meaning of the Logos.* The famous brazen serpent called Nehushtan, is called in the Targums Memra, or the Word, and Justin Martyr,† evidently perpetrating a little pious fraud, changes the symbol while he retains the meaning. He says that "when the Israelites in the desert were set upon and destroyed by venomous beasts, vipers, asps, and all sorts of serpents, Moses, by particular inspiration from God, made the sign of the cross, and placed it by the Holy Tabernacle, and declared that "if the people would look upon that 'cross' and believe they should be saved." So the tree, or tau, or cross, with a serpent upon it, represented,

* Philo Judæus, in commenting upon man being made in the image of God, says, "No mortal thing could have been formed on the similitude of the Supreme Father of the universe, but only after the pattern of the second Deity, who is the Word of the Supreme Being; it is fitting that the rational soul of man should bear before it the type of the Divine Word, of which the human mind is the similitude and form.

† 'Apology,' i. 77.

in the mythical ideas which prevailed in Justin Martyr's time, Divine wisdom or the Logos crucified, for, since the death of Christ, the cross, which in the heathen religions was only used as the symbol of life, came also, when it had been introduced into Christian worship, to be used as the symbol of death. Still, even to this day, this latter signification is invariably the minor one, and the cross, as used in Christian worship, is the symbol of eternal life,—of salvation rather than of destruction. This significance it would never have had, had it not inherited the associations which had belonged to it in the ancient faiths, where it was identical with the Tree, the Linga, and the Phallus.

It may seem a startling idea to many to speak of "Serpent worship" as prevailing among the early Christians. Yet history bears ample testimony to the fact. Of the numerous sects into which the Christians of the second century were divided, one of the most singular was the sect of the "Ophitæ," or Serpentinians. These superadded to the doctrines of the Egyptian Gnostics the notion that the Serpent of Genesis by which Eve was tempted was either Christ Himself, or the Æon "Sophia" or "Logos," concealed under the form of that reptile, whence they kept a number of serpents, and paid them a kind of worship. Mosheim tells us that this sect arose before the Christian era, but that after that period some of its members became Christian, and thus there were two sects of Ophites, one Jewish, the other Christian. M. Didron gives the following account of this sect, 'Christian Iconography,' p. 190:—

"The Ophites, another gnostic sect, considered the god of the Jews not only to be a most wicked but an unintelligent being. They gave a strange interpretation of the fall of man through the temptation of the serpent. According to their account Jaldabaoth, the wicked demi-god, adored by the Jews under the name of Jehovah, was jealous of man, and wished to prevent

the progress of knowledge; but the serpent, the agent of superior wisdom, came to teach man what course he ought to pursue, and by what means he might regain the knowledge of good and evil: the Ophites consequently adored the serpent, and cursed the true God Jehovah. It seems probable that the part here assigned to the serpent was prompted by certain reminiscences of the Phenician and Egyptian religions, in which the serpent was reverenced as a beneficent being." Dr Oliver, in his "Signs and Symbols," says, "the Ophites declared that the serpent which they worshipped was Jesus Christ. This serpent they kept in a cage, and at certain times they opened the cage door, and called the serpent: the animal then came out, and, mounting the table, twined itself about some loaves of bread, this bread they broke and distributed to the company, who all kissed the serpent in turn. This they called their eucharist." Here, then, we have another proof of the identification of the serpent with the Logos or Divine Word, in the mythological systems of the gnostic christians. The serpent, however, was the special emblem of fecundity or reproduction,—of the productive powers of nature. Hence the Logos is also said to be the creator and producer of all things. "By him were all things made, and without him was not anything made that was made." The serpent is sometimes said to be the symbol of desire or love. Clement of Alexandria admits that the sin of Adam lay in indulgence of this character (Stroma iii., pp. 552-566, Potter), and Milton in his 'Paradise Lost,' attributes carnal and lascivious effects to the fruit of the forbidden tree. Many modern scholars have felt compelled to take this view of the story of the Fall, among others may be cited Dr Donaldson, the learned author of the Book of Jashar, pp. 59-62, and also an anonymous tract (De arboribus scientiæ et vitæ), published in Germany in 1849, but attributed by English scholars to the late Archbishop Whately.—See *Donaldson's Christian Orthodoxy*, pp. 215.

Mr. Higgins says (Anacalypsis, vol. i. page 791), "In Genesis there are no fallen angels. All these came into the Mosaic religion on the return from Babylon. The destroyer or serpent of Genesis is correctly the *renovator* or *preserver*. In Genesis there is a tree of knowledge and a tree of life.* This tree of life evidently proves the meaning of the mythos to be that Adam would die at some time,—that he would wear out unless he ate of the fruit of that tree. The serpent, by persuading Eve to taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, &c., taught her what is meant by being naked, and thus by inducing procreation, was the preserver of the species. The plain literal meaning of the words shows very distinctly that this was one of the meanings. In this tradition we have the origin of the Ophites or Oriental emblematical serpent worshippers, to account for whom our antiquarians have been so much perplexed. They worshipped the saviour regenerator, but not the devil in our meaning of the word." Mr Mackay, in his "Progress of the Intellect," says, "The women of Syria still employ the serpent as a charm against barrenness" (vol. i., p. 421.) †

* In many of the forms in which this mythos is found in the ancient mythologies, the "Tree of Knowledge," and the "Tree of Life" are one.

† The following paragraph, which appeared in the 'Daily News' in November last, shews that a similar mystical significance still attaches to the serpent symbol. "A curious picture of Arab life has just been exhibited before the Court of Assize at Constantia in Algeria. A native named Ben-Kammari was accused of mutilating his wife by cutting off her nose and upper lip in a fit of jealousy. The mother of the victim said that to cure her son-in-law, she had consulted a much venerated Marabout, who had given her as a charm for her daughter, a *serpent's head* wrapped up in hemp leaves, which was to be placed in the folds of the husband's turban. The woman appealed to the public present to prove that by this method she would have cured the man of his suspicions, and several Arabs at once took off their head gear and triumphantly shewed the same talisman, while a native officer of the Court, without being consulted, called out to the judge,

The Rev. P. Percival, speaking of the Hindoo worship of the serpent (Land of the Veda, pp. 208), says, "the figure of a serpent is occasionally sculptured on a Linga, thus investing the block of stone with a doubly sacred character," and he gives an engraving of a Hindoo paying his devotions before such a symbol placed on an altar beneath a tree, evidently erected by the way side, like the crosses which are set up in Catholic countries. The Linga in India was represented by a conical stone, and it possessed the same mythological meaning as the pole, or phallus, or tree, in the western world. The serpent on the linga, which the Hindoo to this day regards as the sacred symbol of reproduction or regeneration, is thus identical in its significance with the serpent on the pole or cross, which the Israelites of old worshipped, and which was a sign of life and salvation to them. Many of the readers of the interesting series of pamphlets issued under the able and indefatigable editorship of Mr Scott, have been much perplexed to understand the meaning of the familiar symbol which he has adopted as a monogram, and which, in the use he makes of it, has a mythological meaning, differing very widely from the conventional sense which ordinarily attaches to it. It is, in fact, the symbol of the mythos we have just explained.

"The Brazen Serpent," says Mr Higgins, was called Λογος, or the Word, by the Chaldee Paraphrast, and for this they used the Chaldee word Memra. Thus the cross, or linga, or phallus, with the serpent upon it was called by the letters which convey the idea of word or voice, lingua or language. Hence came the Phallus, the emblem of the generative power in India, to be called the 'Linga,'" (Anacalypsis, vol. i. p. 523.)

We have thus the serpent as a mythological symbol identified in its meaning with the Logos, with the theo-

'Yes I have also a serpent's head; it gives strength to the man and fidelity to the woman.'"

logical Christ, with the Cross, the Tree, and the Phallus ; with the latter, however, not in its purely literal meaning, but when regarded as being the philosophical emblem of creative or reproductive power, of eternal and perpetuated life.

That the Cross, when used as a religious symbol in pre-Christian times, had a Phallic signification is very ably and clearly shown in an article on pre-Christian Crosses in the January number of the Edinburgh Review, from which the following extracts are made:—

"In the demolition of the famous Serapeum, or Temple of Serapis, at Alexandria, the tree-tau was found and was placed there, says Mr King ('Gnostics and their Gems') as the symbol of eternal life. This cross seems to be the Egyptian Tau, ☥ that ancient symbol of the generative power, and therefore transferred into the Bacchic mysteries. Such a cross was found on the wall of a house of Pompeii in juxtaposition with a Phallus, both symbols embodying the same idea."

Farther on, the writer thus sums up his argument:—

"We have endeavoured, in the first place, to demonstrate the universality of the symbol, and, secondly, that under every variety of circumstance, as well in every age as by every people, from the dawn of secular history to the present hour, it has been held by all in the same superstitious veneration, been honoured with the same distinguishing rites, and always has expressed the same doctrine or mystery. The language of definition varies, but the definition itself is substantially the same in every case. In Egypt, Assyria, and Britain, it was emblematical of creative power and eternity; in India, China, and Scandinavia, of heaven and immortality ; in the two Americas of rejuvenescence and freedom from physical suffering, while in both hemispheres it was the common symbol of the resurrection, or the sign of the life to come."

The symbolism of the world's ancient faiths is still perpetuated in the rites of Freemasonry, though very

few masons are at all aware of their real significance, a secondary, or esoteric, sense being generally assigned to them. So Dr Oliver, one of the few men who have really made the science of Masonry their study, says, in a lecture delivered to the brethren of his order, "You are not ignorant that the serpent has an established place among our emblems, although its true allegorical significance is not given in our accustomed disquisitions . . . though commonly introduced into all the groups of emblematical characters, its origin and *secret* reference are not satisfactorily accounted for in the Masonic lectures. The serpent," he adds, "was a symbol almost co-equal with the institution of Masonry on this globe by the first created man," and, after asserting that the absolute worship of the Serpent became an institution prevalent throughout the whole world, he continues:—"They were universal emblems of life and health, received the appellation of the beneficent dæmon (*αγαθο-δαιμων*), and were visible representatives of the god of creation and providence. Still more remarkable is it that there was always attached to the serpent an undefined idea of some restoration to the Divine favour, which was expected to be accomplished by a gratuitous sacrifice."—(Oliver's 'Lectures on Signs and Symbols.')

In some forms of the mythos of the Temptation, the woman, not the serpent, is represented as the tempter. In the Hamiltonian collection of Etruscan pottery, there are frequent representations of the Tree and Serpent which at first sight might be taken as illustrations of the story of the Fall. Several engravings from these are given by the author of 'Time and Faith,' in his interesting volumes. One represents a tree laden with fruit, around the stem of which a serpent is twining; on the left stands a woman in the act of plucking the fruit and presenting it to a man. The superior stature and dignity of the woman in this picture, implying her superior rank, marking her in fact as a goddess; on

the right of the tree Hercules is seen returning from Tartarus, bringing with him the three-headed dog Cerberus, the guardian of the gates of hell—a token that evil has now been subdued, and even death itself conquered. The subject, therefore, is that of a restoration rather than a fall, and the offering of the woman is the fruit not of a forbidden tree but the fruit of the tree of life, of health, and immortality, the qualities of which are indicated by the serpent coiled around the trunk. Mr. Godfrey Higgins gives a figure from Spence's Polymetis, in which we have, from the gems of Ancient Greece, another version of the Mosaic mythos. This is a tree, with a serpent coiled round it; this serpent is represented whispering into the ear of a man, who is induced thereby to pluck the fruit. Mr Higgins says, "This is the serpent 'Heva' tempting Adam! Eve is here the serpent." The Hebrew word *Hava*, translated in the authorised version "Eve," signifies a "giver of life," and the same word *Hava*, in the Chaldean language signifies *a serpent.*

Under the word Eva, Jacob Bryant, in his 'Analysis of the Ancient Mythology,' has the following:—"Clemens Alexandrinus says (and Epiphanius says the same) that this term signified a serpent, if pronounced with a proper aspirate. . . . Some think that the invocation Eva! Eva! (used in the celebration of the Bacchic mysteries) related to the great mother of mankind who was deceived by a serpent; but I should think that Eva was the same as Eph, Epha, Opha, which the Greeks rendered ὀφις, Ophis, and by it denoted a serpent."

One of the 'Targums' says that a serpent, and not Eve, his wife, tempted Adam. But the Ophites regarded the serpent not as a tempter but as a redeemer or saviour, hence, says Godfrey Higgins, the real object of their worship was the principle of fecundity which Eve represented, and Eve, or the serpent, had the same signification as of old had Isis, Ceres, Astarte,

the types of Nature's fruitfulness, or as the Virgin Mary, the "mother of God," has among our modern devotees.

So it was common, in ancient times, in order to give a miraculous character to the births of great or learned men; to assert that they were serpent-born; that they had sprung from the embraces of a serpent, which here was made a symbol of the Divine Spirit. A birth of this kind was claimed for Cecrops, the first king or founder of Athens, who, it was said, was half-man and half-serpent. So Pythagoras was fabled to have sprung from the embraces of his mother with the god Apollo — the python or serpent of the sun. So the mother of Alexander the Great, Olympias, declared, during her pregnancy, that she was with child by a dragon—the meaning being simply to claim a divine character, manifested either by superior strength or wisdom for the child so distinguished. So the story of Cadmus sowing serpents' teeth and producing armed men admits of a similar explanation. It is a fable implying that "knowledge is power." Cadmus was said to have introduced letters, but he was also connected with the Ophitæ or Serpent worshippers, and, at his death, was, it is related, changed into a serpent of stone. Bryant says, "That the priests of the Ophitæ were very learned, and that those who had been instructed by them were called serpents," and long after the superstition in its grosser form had passed away the forms of speech which it originated remained, and thus we have the New Testament recording that Jesus gave utterance to the maxim, "Be ye wise as serpents."

The stone pillar that formed so conspicuous an ornament in the front of Egyptian temples, and which had the same meaning as the stone pillar or linga of the Hindoos, was called an obelisk, a composite word signifying god and serpent. Obelisks, originally serpent symbols, in the name they still bear, testify to the prevalence of the worship in which they found their

origin. A pillar or obelisk still stands in the significantly shaped enclosure in front of St Peter's at Rome, presenting on a huge scale an exact fac-simile of the well-known Hindoo Argha, or type of the reproductive power of nature.

The seraphim and cherubim of the Jewish mythology have also the meaning of fiery serpents. This has been pointed out by the learned and ingenious author of the 'Book of God,' who quotes Faber as follows: "It is the mystery of our holy language, says Rabbi Bechai, that a serpent is called a seraph, as an angel is called a seraph." And in accordance with this supposed mystery, Faber adds, it has been imagined that Satan tempted Eve under the form of one of those resplendent winged serpents which are denominated seraphim!' (Faber's *Pag. Idol.* i. 448) The word cherub also, Godfrey Higgins asserts, has the meaning of serpent—See *Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon.*

We have been speaking of the serpent in its connection with the more ancient of the world's mythological systems, and in these we have invariably seen it regarded as a divine and beneficent symbol. In more modern mythologies, and especially in the Christian theological systems, the serpent occupies a very different position, and here it is regarded as possessing an evil and maleficent character. It is the symbol of destruction rather than of life. It becomes "that old serpent the devil." This change of character marks an important change or reformation which took place in the faiths of the ancient world about 600 years before the time of Christ. It originated in the dual system of the ancient Persians in the reformation effected in that faith by the traditional Zoroaster. Here the origin of evil was ascribed to the malevolence of an evil god, and this evil god, Ahriman, was symbolized by a serpent. When we consider the instinctive horror with which this reptile is invariably regarded, it is a legitimate matter of surprise that it should ever have been

made an object of worship as the symbol of the wise and beneficent God. That this was done, however, is a fact which is not now to be questioned, the proofs that remain to us are absolutely overwhelming. It would seem, however, that the advancing intelligence of mankind revolted against a worship that in its literal sense was so disgusting, and in the reformation that was effected the serpent was degraded by being made the symbol of an evil and malignant power, of a power that was ever opposing and doing battle with the good and beneficent God. Thus Ormuzd and Ahriman were represented in continual strife, and all the gods of the later pagan mythologies as soon as the pagan systems felt the influence of this change of thought made their gods to battle with some malignant dragon, some monstrous serpent. Under the influence of this reform the Jews, who till the days of Hezekiah had burnt incense to a serpent effigy in the streets of Jerusalem, now after their return from captivity, embodied the story of the Fall into their literature, which story they evidently copied from the Persian mythos. This mythos is thus quoted from the Zend-Avesta, by Kalisch :—

"The first couple, the parents of the human race, Meshia and Meshiane, lived originally in purity and innocence. Perpetual happiness was promised to them by Ormuzd, the creator of every good gift, if they persevered in their virtue. But an evil demon (Dev) was sent to them by Ahriman, the representative of every thing noxious and sinful. He appeared unexpectedly in the form of a serpent, and gave them the fruit of a *wonderful tree*, Hom, which imparted immortality, and had the power of restoring the dead to life. Thus evil inclinations entered their hearts ; all their moral excellence was destroyed. Ahriman himself appeared under the form of the same reptile, and completed the work of seduction. They acknowledged him instead of Ormuzd as the Creator of everything good ; and the consequence was that they forfeited for ever the eternal

happiness for which they were destined." (See *Colenso on Pentateuch*, vol. iv). This mythos presents us with perhaps the earliest known instance of the serpent appearing in an evil character in the mythological systems of the ancients. The Jews during their residence in Babylon came in contact with the purer ideas that marked the reformed Persian faith, and on the conquest of the Chaldeans by the Persians and the deliverance of the Jews, their writers spoke of Cyrus, the Persian monarch, as being the Messiah or Christ of Jehovah, thus owning, with him, a close fellowship of faith. Immediately afterwards we find them re-editing their literature and prefacing their own book of early traditions (Genesis) with the myths of the Persian cosmogony.

The *bona fide* Jewish literature shews that no knowledge of these myths existed among the Jews till the comparatively late period of their return from Babylon. It has been well remarked in this matter that "the Jews went into captivity a nation of idolaters, and came out from it a band of puritans." This estimate of the serpent as an evil principle pervades the New Testament, where it becomes in the Book of Revelation identical with the devil.

The religion of Jesus was a moral reform. It counselled personal piety, without reference to mythological ideas. It simply ignored mythology. When, however, Christianity became, after the death of Jesus, formulated into a religious system, the stream of mythology mingled with it. One of the most important of the early heresies was that introduced in the third century by Mani, which, under the name of Manichæism, mixed up the religion of Christ with a form of Persian Buddhism. This placed the Devil as an evil principle in strong and marked antagonism to Christ as the representative of the good god, and although this system, as a whole, was finally rejected, it yet largely tinged the theology of the great Christian Father Augustine, and

it tinges still more the "Evangelical Christianity" of our own day. The earlier sect of the Ophites was evidently an attempt to make Christianity harmonious with the more ancient mythological systems in which the serpent was the Agatho-dæmon, the emblem of the good god. In the mythologies of Greece and Rome, and Phœnicia, which, being derivatives from the more ancient religions of Egypt and India, are comparatively modern, we find the serpent symbol in a transitional state. In the earlier myths it is an object of reverence or worship. Through Cecrops it was the great Father of the Grecian people. It symbolised Apollo as in Egypt it symbolised Cneph. It spoke the oracles at the various shrines, or inspired the priestess to deliver them. The modern version of this myth represents the Python as a malignant serpent which persecuted the mother of Apollo, and which the god, when born, attacked and killed ; but the name of Apollo's festival, the Pythia, and the name also of Apollo's priestess, shew that the name Python once had a very different significance. Bryant says that originally Apollo and the Python were the same, and the name Tripos, of the place whence the oracles were delivered, was a varition for Tor-opus or Tor-ophis ; the serpent-hill or temple where they were both worshipped being one and the same deity.—('Analysis of Ancient Mythology,' 1-464.) In this connection it will be interesting to notice an etymology derived from the root Ophis, a Serpent, viz., Ops, power, rule, dominion—Opuleus, wealthy—Opus, work—whence our words option, opulent, operative, and in the Greek, *οπτομαί*, I see, whence our word optics and its derivative—the serpent representing wisdom, power, foresight, and being the type of the demiurgos, or creative or generative power, by which all things were made, and riches and wealth accumulated. Again, in the classical mythologies, Pluto, the god of the lower regions, is by some mythologists regarded as the same with Plutus, the god of

riches, while in the Christian theology the Devil and the Serpent are convertible terms. Thus in the later forms of classical mythos we have Apollo slaying the Python ; Hercules destroying the Hydra ; the Constantine medal of the Cross surmounting a Serpent; the national legend that till lately had its symbol on our own gold coin of 'St. George and the Dragon,' and in the mythological corruptions of the religion of Jesus which make up the popular Christianity, we have Him vanquishing the Devil, and the 'Old Serpent' cast into the bottomless pit and chained for a thousand years.*

The use of the '*Tree*,' as the mythological symbol of eternal life, has long survived the employment of the '*Serpent*' for a similar purpose ; and in the Christian legends of the middle ages the 'Tree of Life' was repeatedly identified as the prophetic symbol sometimes of Christ and sometimes of the Cross. From a copious essay on this subject, published in German, by Dr. Piper, a translation of which is given in the 'Journal of Sacred Literature' for January 1864, and continued in subsequent numbers, we borrow the following extracts :—"We direct attention, first of all, to two representations external to the Church. These appear to be taken from the Tree of Paradise.† The one occurs in a faith and ritual outside of revelation—we refer to the adoration paid to a 'Tree of Life' in the religion of Zoroaster. The sacred writings of the Persians speak of the tree Hom, which is called the Head of the Trees; it is regarded as the Tree of Immortality, the juice of which will confer life on man at the resurrection. Besides this, there is a description of a 'Tree of Life'

* The legend of St. Patrick, who introduced the Christian religion into Ireland, banishing the snakes and reptiles, may have been but a figurative way of saying that Christianity supplanted the old religion, of which Serpent worship was a conspicuous feature.

† The story in Genesis is, as is now well known, the copy, not the original.

in a Jewish work written before the Christian era, the 'Book of Enoch.'"

The legend of the cross on which Christ suffered, having been made from the wood of the 'tree of knowledge,' appears in the middle ages in several forms, one which was current in the thirteenth century relates, "that Eve along with the forbidden fruit broke off a branch from the 'tree of knowledge,' which she in her distraction of spirit brought with her from Paradise. Stuck into the ground by her, it grew to a great tree, under which Abel was killed, at a later time it was used in the building of the most holy place in the temple of Solomon, and finally it yielded the beams out of which the cross was made." Another legend contained in an old French poem by the priest Herman of Valenciennes, says, "that after the fall of Adam, God rooted out the tree of knowledge and cast it over the wall of Paradise. A thousand years after, it was found by Abraham, who planted it in his garden, on which a voice from heaven announced to him that this was the tree on the wood of which the Redeemer should be crucified." The Tree of Knowledge and the Cross of Christ have been associated from the earliest periods of Christianity. In the Gospel of Nicodemus after Christ has visited Hades; the personification of Hades addressing Satan, says, 'Behold and see that the dead one has gone from me; what therefore thou hast gained through the 'Tree of Knowledge,' thou hast lost through the 'Tree of the Cross." So St Augustine in a sermon on 'Eve and Mary,' says, "As we have been made dead by a tree, so have we been made alive by a tree. A tree discovered to us our nakedness, and a tree has covered us with the leaves of mercy," &c. Similar illustrations could be cited in great numbers. Those adduced, however, serve to show how early and how continuously the Tree and Cross symbol have been united, and though to the latter symbol there attaches a special significance, derived from an actual historical

event, the death of Jesus ; yet to this has been superadded the significance which attached to the Tree symbol in the ancient worships, and thus, in Christian usage, the Cross is more often made the symbol of the resurrection.

We see then a chain of gradual and progressive development linking the modern doctrine of the Cross as the means of life and salvation, with the Tree and Serpent worship of the early world. The Life-giving Cross is but a reproduction of the symbol of the life-giving Tree. The Tree of life, the Book of life, the Word of life, the Agathodæmon, the Serpent of Æsculapius, the Sophia, the Logos and the Christ are seen to be but natural and progressive evolutions from the primitive ideas of worship, and are not special revelations from God to man. As the Church of Rome, the mother of all our modern churches, adopted the great mass of Pagan ceremonial in her worship, so in her theological fancies she embodied much more than was worth retaining in the ancient mythological thought, except for astute purposes of superstition. Religion has thus been a gradual growth and not a spasmodic revelation, and the doctrines concerning which churches now differ with such Christian bitterness and strife, are for the most part mere Pagan fancies. This 'Tree and Serpent worship' shews us plainly to ourselves, and makes it evident beyond the power of contradiction, that all our modern Christian doctrine has its roots in Pagan thought, and has not been given by supernatural revelation to man. The old nature worship which deified the fertile properties of nature was the earliest worship of which a record remains. In this worship God was emphatically 'the Creator,' and the sun and moon, the Tree and the Serpent were the symbols under which He was adored. The first chapter of Genesis, which relates the story of Eve's temptation and of Adam's fall, is a plain and unmistakable reproduction of one of the myths or legends of

this ancient faith. It is a copy of a tradition, or rather of a poetic allegory, that belonged to the earlier world. But on this narrative all the doctrinal systems of our modern churches depend;—it is the common foundation on which they have all been built. The fall of man is the only basis on which the doctrine of the atonement can rest. If there was no fall, the atonement is a manifest superfluity, and it *could not* then have been the mission of Jesus of Nazareth to have made one. Our knowledge of the 'Tree and Serpent worship' of the ancient heathen world proves that the Jewish narrative of Adam and Eve, and the forbidden fruit, is but an old heathen fancy, a fable and not a fact, and, being so, there is but one opinion at which reasonable men can arrive with regard to the doctrine of the atonement which rests so exclusively upon it, and which apart from it has no possible basis.

Surely in the presence of these facts the hour is ripe for a new reformation. Our churches are giving to the people the stones of fossilised and obsolete fables in place of that living bread of spiritual truth, for want of which the multitude are famishing. It is full time for a change to come; to use the wise words of Lessing, it is time to give up what the churches call Christianity, and to give the RELIGION OF CHRIST a trial.

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